

REMEMBERING RUSTIN: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS
OF INTERSECTIONAL
MEMORY

by

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ABSTRACT

While communities grapple with combining the discourses of race and sexuality, as well as reviving the accomplishments of LGBTQ individuals through/in our public memories, the voice of Bayard Rustin, celebrated activist and noted contributor of the nonviolent resistance movement of the 1960s, demands to be heard. Though historians have modestly attended to Rustin's contributions and historical legacy, his ethos as a rhetorical figure has eluded scholarship within communication studies. Building upon a grounded construct of theoretical frameworks connecting public memory, queer public address, and intersectionality this study engages the rhetoric and public memory of Bayard Rustin. This study explores the rhetorical strategies available to a gay civil rights leader and how these strategies affect the legacy of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the future of gay rights, and discourses at the intersection of race and sexuality.

Through examining his most popular pieces of discourse from 1942 to 1987, this study first attempts to recover the rhetoric of Rustin by comparing his rhetorical tactics across temporal and situational spaces. Second, this study analyzes the rhetoric surrounding contemporary sites of Rustin's memory in the service of intersectional resistance, queer history, and LGBTQ politics through a reading of the PBS documentary *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, and subsequent curricula and discussion guides developed for middle and high school students. As a result, critique of Rustin's discourse offers the field of rhetorical studies implications concerning counter memory and intersectionality.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Chris Brooks, the man who gave me a future so that I can continue to uncover the past.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On July 14, 2011, Senate Bill 48 or the FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) Education Act was signed into law by California Governor Jerry Brown. The bill required that school curricula and textbooks include the contributions and histories of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and disabled Americans (McGreevy).¹ Once passed, the bill drew a multitude of media attention around how sexualities are taught the curricula of U.S. history. Dubbed the “gay history bill” by its opponents, passage of the bill by the California legislature was met with vehement reactions by traditional family values groups whose responses ranged from inciting fear of exposing children to a “gay agenda” to an outright campaign to repeal the law. Stop SB48, a “coalition of pro-family organizations, parents, students, teachers,” organized a petition to repeal the law through referendum citing concerns about California’s budget crisis (“Stop SB48”).

In response, California activists and proponents of the Courage Campaign, an online organizing network of progressive grassroots organizations, pondered what the erasure of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (hereafter LGBTQ) history from textbooks would mean to the collective memory of other social movements, specifically the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.² In a Courage Campaign call to action, National Field Director Arisa Hatch

¹ While the bill does encourage the discussion of disabled Americans, the primary focus of this project will remain on the implications of sexuality.

²For the purpose of this thesis I will use LGBTQ when referring to contemporary discourse; however when discussing historical discourses concerning queer agency I shall resort to the terminology utilized by gay and lesbian rhetors in their respective contexts.

argued that as a child growing up in Southern California she would never have learned about contributions of important gay historical figures. She noted, for instance, “I never learned that Bayard Rustin was the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington where Dr. King gave his historic ‘I Have a Dream’ speech” (Hatch, 2). The Courage Campaign argues that the erasure of LGBTQ history threatens the histories of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as key advances in the struggle for U.S. Civil Rights came from the contributions of gay and lesbian people. Thus, the campaign disputes the belief that the two movements exist on separate and isolated timelines. Despite this effort, debate continued to flare. A high profile African American church asked supporters of the bill to leave a congregation meeting to discuss the bill (“Emotions Flare”). In an open letter to African American people of faith Equality California, the local arm of the Human Rights Campaign (as well as the Rustin/Jordan coalition) cited the power of teaching the contributions of gay and lesbian figures as a means of preventing the bullying of LGBTQ students. The letter argued that, “Young people develop a sense of their own place in history by knowing about those that came before them. When Black children learn about the enormous contributions of Rev. King and other U.S. Civil Rights heroes, it bolsters their sense of self-worth. For children to also learn of the contributions of openly gay activist Bayard Rustin, who served as an advisor to Rev. King and key organizers in history it teaches pride, tolerance and understanding” (M. Davis 2). As the national media focused on the merits of constructing a curriculum of LGBTQ history one commentator asked a pertinent, if not poignant, question: what is LGBTQ history? Is it a discussion of historical figures that were openly gay and lesbian or is it “a discussion of people in history who are now believed to have been homosexual?” (qtd. in “California Public Schools”). While communities grapple with combining the discourses of race and sexuality, as well as the impact of reviving the accomplishments of LGBTQ individuals

into our public memories through education, it is imperative to center this discussion on a public figure who allows inquiry into both subjectivities. This thesis engages the rhetoric and memory of one such character: Bayard Rustin.

Rustin, a crucial strategist and prominent figure of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, is best remembered for helping organize the 1963 March on Washington, assisting with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955, and acting as a close advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Byrd & Guy-Sheftall 360). First depicted publicly on the cover of *Life* magazine following the historic March on Washington, Rustin attained a high level of cultural visibility. However, Rustin's contributions to the canon of African American rhetoric remain in the shadows, relegated to the type of minor iconography assigned to less influential figures of the movement. In his biography of Rustin, Jerald Podair suggests that this banishment resulted from the common thought that "Rustin violated virtually every political and personal taboo in twentieth-century America" (1). These "personal taboos" were, in fact, Rustin's admitted homosexuality and habit of sexual proclivity. Regarding Rustin's homosexuality, biographer and historian John D'Emilio describes Rustin's sexual history as threatening to "erupt into consciousness," highlighting the damaging dimensions of compulsory heterosexuality (*Lost Prophet* 193). D'Emilio's biography goes on to catalog the various designs of political enemies and jealous rivals who sought to use Rustin's sexuality as a liability to both his political career and to the mainstream U.S. Civil Rights Movement as a whole. The unnamed, but understood, homophobia that ingrained itself within mid-twentieth century American society found a haven within the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (Morris "Pink Herring"). As a result, Podair claims that, "despite his charisma, courage, organizational abilities, rhetorical skills, and vision, Rustin was rarely permitted a leading public role in the social movements he helped shape" (2). While Rustin's

contributions and historical legacy have been revived deftly by the work of historians his legacy as a rhetorical figure has eluded scholarship within the field of communication studies³. Of particular interest to discursive studies are Rustin's activist tactics during the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, his middle period of political and economic focus, as well as his period of gay activism during the mid-1980s during which he gave a series of speeches on the importance of gay rights legislation.⁴ What are the implications of invoking the memory of Rustin, celebrated activist and noted contributor to the nonviolent resistance movement of the 1960s? Are we to remember him as a figurehead of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement or as a historical example for contemporary LGBTQ social movements, and does either choice adequately reflect his lived experience? Further, our own age lacks the determined African American queer perspectives of Joe Beam, Essex Hemphill, Marlon Riggs and Steven Corbin (Brownworth), and there is much to be learned from the rhetoric of a figure who struggled to build legitimacy through social change for identities of race and sexuality.

This thesis creates a space for queer history and memory using the remembrances of Rustin as a site for the construction of not only LGBTQ, but intersectional discourses, as well. Constituting public memory of queer individuals is important work. Noted scholar in public memory Charles Morris argues that the merits of queer historicism “comes not only from its insistence on sexuality's relation to public discourse, but in its mandate that we as historical critics and rhetorical historians place ourselves in time, and consider how desire and other motives shape our readings of historical discourse” (Morris 405). Without a historical narrative of queer centered movements and leaders who contributed to the history of our nation, what hope

³ See D'Emilio *Lost Prophet*, Levine, Anderson, and Podair for historical analysis of Rustin's life.

⁴ For the purpose of this project I use the terminology of “gay” when referring to historical pieces of discourse prior to the conventional LGBTQ terminology.

is there to the young gay and lesbian teenagers willing to take their own lives than live a life others worked so hard to create⁵? Without gay history we are left with only a catalogue of wrongdoings to LGBTQ individuals who continue to plead for help but take no action. We are left with empty promises of a world that is supposed to get better without the examples of those who made it so. Public memory of gay individuals provides as fertile a ground for subaltern resistance as the actions of queer activists themselves.

Queer memory projects also produce discourse that creates agency for queer subjectivities. In their readings of public memory Carole Blair and Neil Michel assert, “discourse includes and excludes rewards and punishes, promises and denies, constructs and undermines privilege and so forth.... It constructs subject positions” (70.) As such, the discourse of LGBTQ centered history provides LGBTQ individuals with the rhetorical images, names, and examples to create impactful messages that re-center their identity from oppressed to activist. Simply put, queer memory is more than remembering words and deeds of queer individuals; queer memory is the path from which we create queer futures.

In addition to his memory as a queer figurehead, Rustin represents a man beyond the sympathies of identity politics. Rustin espoused ideas and ideals that bled beyond racial, national, or sexual boundaries. Yet, Rustin was a man who lived well into old age. Unlike histories of martyrdom in queer public figures like Harvey Milk there was no tragic end to rally a legacy around a man who contributed to the single greatest event in the U.S. Civil Rights history (Rothaus). There was no candle light vigil, no Hollywood feature film, to instill his name in the recorded history books. As a subaltern figure he donned the scarlet letter of two marginalized

⁵ While scholars offer a variety of definitions around the term ‘queer’, and its theoretical richness as compared to the somewhat limiting gay or lesbian, for the purpose of this project I accept a definition of queer theory as a critique of binary through a recognition and address of all forms of oppression (Marinucci 106).

groups, yet his contributions were so prolific, his tactics so bold, and his rhetoric so empowering that unable to physically remove him from political and social spheres, he was simply forgotten. As African American studies scholars Devon Carbado and Donald Weise noted “before the first Rustin biographies appeared in the 1990s, U.S. Civil Rights historians dealt with him when they chose to include him at all – as a sideline activist whose principle purpose was to support King and the movement” (x). Silence is a powerful weapon against the speech one does not like to hear. Exploring the rhetorical construction of queer memory (such as the case studies performed by scholars such as Morris) brings voice to the “problem of silences: silences created by censorship of archival and educational institutions, historians’ refusal to acknowledge the sexualities of those they study” (*Queering Public Address* 4). This study makes the case for Rustin as an important rhetorical figure as his discourse presents cohesion of various subject positions that contrast the contemporary trend of “divide and conquer” identity politics.

Rustin’s memory also has the potential to answer the critiques of the Gay Rights Movement’s lack of collaborations and cohesions with other marginalized identities. At Rustin’s memorial service Lane Kirkland, president of the AFL-CIO, reiterated Rustin’s emphasis on coalitions stating, “Although he gave his whole heart to the causes he fought for, no cause could ever limit or define him. Only on issues of right and wrong did he take sides...He traveled the world on behalf of the hopeless, the poor the exploited. He understood that the human freedom was a seamless fabric that we all have to repair whenever or wherever it is torn” (Anderson 357). In a world marked by hierarchies of identity Rustin’s rhetoric of unity against all systems of oppression is one worthy of not only remembrance, but also understanding.

Overall, this study explores the rhetorical strategies that become available to a gay U.S. Civil Rights leader, and how these strategies affect the legacy of the U.S. Civil Rights

Movement, the future of gay rights rhetoric, and the intersectionality of race and sexuality. Specifically, this project examines the rhetoric of Rustin in both U.S. Civil Rights Movement and gay rights contexts through two distinct, yet inter-related, parts. First I attend to Rustin's discourse in relation to his time through examining his most popular pieces of discourse. The texts for this rhetorical analysis come from Rustin's temporal space from the 1942 through his death in 1987, including the essays and speeches "Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow," "The Negro and Nonviolence," "The Meaning of Birmingham," "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," "From Montgomery to Stonewall," and "The New Niggers are Gays." Second, I analyze the rhetoric surrounding contemporary sites of Rustin's memory in the service of intersectional resistance, queer history, and LGBTQ politics through a reading of the PBS documentary *Brother Outsider: The Life of Bayard Rustin*, and subsequent curricula and discussion guides developed for middle and high school students. These texts remain consistent with previous explorations of queer memory which authorize "that recognizing and understanding various and complex responses to homophobic oppression which predate the stonewall revolution often require critics, by necessity, to explore unorthodox texts" (Morris "Responsibilities of the Critic" 279). Reviving and remembering Rustin's voice, these texts allow insight into how memory impacts intersectional individuals.

Plan of Study

Rustin's memory is a rhetorical nexus of public memory, sexuality, queer history and intersectional discourse making it worthy of analysis. Exploring the rhetorical strategies available to a gay U.S. Civil Rights Leader impacts the legacy of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the potential of gay rights rhetoric, and the intersectionality of race and sexuality. The application of theories of public memory to a queer figure of U.S. Civil Rights offers insight

into the erasure of public discourse, as well as the potential of invoking Rustin's rhetorical figure in coalitional outreach from the gay communities to other marginalized groups.

The remainder of the thesis unfolds as follows. Chapter One articulates the research questions, rationale for the case and artifacts as well as the methodological aims of the study. Chapter Two discusses previous research within the field of communication studies concerning intersectionality, public memory, queer theory and public address, and memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Chapter Three provides a biographical and contextual analysis of Rustin's rhetorical situation through both primary and secondary work. Particular interest is paid to Rustin's sexuality and constraint within U.S. Civil Rights discourse.

Chapter Four analyzes the intersectional rhetoric of Rustin's discourse in his time. I recover the rhetoric of Rustin through examining his most popular pieces of discourse from 1942 to 1987 by comparing his rhetorical tactics across temporal and situational spaces. Through his public address and essays, "The Negro vs. Jim Crow," "The Negro and Nonviolence," "The Meaning of Birmingham," "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," "The New Niggers are Gays," and "From Montgomery to Stonewall," I trace the intersectional rhetorical strategies employed by Rustin as a gay U.S. Civil Rights leader. The later part of this analysis explores the implications of Rustin's discourse on identity and conceptualizations of intersectional rhetoric.

Chapter Five investigates how a contemporary film and curricula recuperate and circulate Rustin's memory. These texts are examined to discern how Rustin is remembered and the implications of that remembrance for queer public address and memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. The later part of this analysis develops schemas for Rustin as a site of resistive memory. Chapter Six then concludes with a return to the research questions and describes the

study's findings as well as limitations and directions for future research. In light of this research I contend that this project creates a space for queer and intersectional memory using the remembrances of Rustin as a site of discourse intersecting race and sexuality.

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING THE MEMORIES OF RACE AND SEXUALITY

The literature review for this thesis begins with an overview of research on the application of queer theory to rhetorical scholarship. As previously discussed, Rustin's sexuality served as constant source of contention in both his time and in impacting the erasure of and the barriers to his legacy as a rhetorical figure. An attempt to generate a "queer" inquiry into public address scholarship thus serves as a critical framework through which to view Rustin's discourse. The initial methodological section of the literature review considers research concerning intersectionality as a mode of critical cultural analysis. I argue that Rustin's identity and his contemporary appropriations must be seen through intersecting rather than isolated lenses to discern how his memory impacts sexual as well as racial discourse. The literature review proceeds by discussing scholarship situating concepts of intersectionality, public memory overall, and queer public address. Rustin's sexuality as it interacted with his legacy as both a U.S. Civil Rights leader and a prominent historical figure within the African American community creates implications for how queer memory is enacted and erased. Finally, the literature review evaluates the various frames through which memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement is evoked.

Intersectionality

Initially, it is important to apply the theory of intersectionality to Rustin's rhetoric to navigate the turn from intersectional identity to intersectional rhetoric. Intersectionality, as a concept, was first publicly named and articulated by the Combahee River Collective, a Black

feminist lesbian organization (13-22). However, the first scholarly introduction of intersectionality came from critical legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw to argue for the multidimensional lived experiences of black women, meaning they cannot be identified as either black or women. Crenshaw proposes examining how identities intersect generates greater understanding of women of color's multiple oppressions. Crenshaw argues black women are "sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender" ("Demarginalizing" 140). In later works, Crenshaw develops a clearer sense of intersectionality to "consider how the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism" ("Mapping the Margins" 1243-1244). Specifically, she works against discourses that require women of color to respond either as women *or* as people of color, thus "women of color are marginalized within both" contexts ("Mapping the Margins" 1244). When society requires one to think of identity in terms of either or it ignores the multiple of identity positions that work in concert to create a fully formed human being.

Crenshaw defines three forms of intersectionality, structural, political, and representational, that expose the experience of difference achieved by women of color. First she defines structural intersectionality to reflect the ways in which black women experience "domestic violence, rape and medical reform quantifiably different than white women" ("Mapping the Margins" 1245). Second Crenshaw contends that political intersectionality "highlights the fact that women of color are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas" ("Mapping the Margins" 1251). Finally Crenshaw's definition of representational intersectionality suggests analysis include "both the

ways in which these images are produced through a confluence of prevalent narratives of race and gender” (“Mapping the Margins” 1283). Crenshaw’s intersectionality thesis allows rhetorical scholars to examine the way discourse creates a matrix of oppressions in which multiple dominant discourses constrain various aspects of identity. Her work is imperative to create resistive discourse of feminism and race that avoids replication of the subordination of women in racial discourse, and the privileging of white experience in feminist strategies (“Mapping the Margins 1253).

Since its original inception, scholars have extended the use of intersectionality to critical communication studies in a variety of contexts. Rhetorician Carrie Crenshaw seeks to expand the original intersectionality thesis by examining the intersections of identity that occur among women (223). C. Crenshaw juxtaposes media reports of women in the Gulf War to examine differences among women and contends that “categories of identity are socially constructed” but emphasizes that individual identities are fluid and intersecting (Crenshaw, C 224). C. Crenshaw argues that intersectionality has utility for rhetoricians “to analyze critically how differences among women are discursively constructed to hierarchically privilege the experience of heterosexual, white, U.S. women” (220). As rhetorical studies deals with the formation and deconstruction of power and hegemony it is vital for rhetorical analysis to begin to deal with questions of overlapping, and intersecting forms of oppression. C. Crenshaw’s study also likens intersectionality to the critical turn in rhetorical studies and observes that our rhetorical world creates consequences to our material reality (Crenshaw, C 220-221). Crenshaw suggests a methodology for uncovering intersectionality by “tracing the categories of race and gender to their intersections by asking how constructions of race are gendered and sexualized” (223). Crenshaw defines structural intersectionality as “the material consequences of being situated

with overlapping hierarchies of oppression,” and political intersectionality as “how political and discursive practices of race and gender interrelate to erase and marginalize women of color” (223). These definitions explicate the lived experience of women of color as discourses often require them to choose between aspects of their identity. However when requiring speaking subjects to speak as either African American or as women, we ignore the fact that women of color are never this *or* that, they simply are. Finally rhetorical analysis of representational intersectionality deals with the deconstruction of gender and race narratives as they combine and collide (Crenshaw, C 223). In Chapter Four I will employ Crenshaw’s method to analyze Rustin’s discourse along structural, political, and representational intersections.

Despite multiple advances in its theorization, there are some challenges to the general practice of intersectionality that must be suitably addressed. In their survey of rhetorical, political, and organizational uses of intersectionality, gender scholars Rachel Luft and Jane Ward summarize five critiques of the theory- misidentification, appropriation, institutionalization, reification, and operationalization. First, Luft and Ward describe the “slippage” that occurs between intersectionality and previous concepts of double jeopardy and multiculturalism (12). They specifically examine how feminist theory’s embrace of intersectionality has narrowed the purpose of the theory to combat sexism, without addressing the theories racial components. Second, appropriation of the term “intersectionality” seeks to benefit from the virtue of the theory without supporting the theory’s resistive work (Luft and Ward 16). It is not enough to merely mention someone’s intersectional identity, but rather the critic must move scholarship that “uncritically centers gender, sexuality, or whiteness while merely applying race” to one that really explores the collisions of Crenshaw’s original theory (Luft and Ward 18). Intersectionality also threatens to be institutionalized through organizational ‘diversity’ programs that encourage

tolerance in name but fail to address the social forces that create social contentions (Luft and Ward 20). Research also embraces the open-ended and ambiguous quality of intersectionality's metaphor of intersection, axis and matrix (K. Davis 69). However, these metaphors imply a fixed sense of identity that tends to contrast against queer theory's arguments of fluidity.

While acknowledging these critiques, I suggest that intersectionality has the potential to take a shift in rhetorical studies to examine discourse that both shapes and contests intersectional audiences. Rhetorician Darrel Enck-Wanzer's application of intersectionality to rhetorical theory proposes intersectional rhetoric as one that "places multiple rhetorical forms on relatively equal footing" (177). However, Enck-Wanzer takes intersectionality theory beyond the scope of identity into the expansion of the rhetorical forms of texts outside the body into multiple possibilities. Enck-Wanzer's depiction of the Young Lords Organization's (YLO) campaign for better living conditions in the Puerto Rican barrios of New York City in the late 1960s suggests that rhetoricians examine the intersections of different discourses. While Enck-Wanzer situates intersectionality in terms of the channels and texts of discourse, I contend that intersectionality theory is its most valuable when applied to forms of identity. Hence, my project seeks to examine the queer and sexual identities of both the speaker and his desired audience shapes the discourse and reception of the rhetoric.

While feminist scholars have utilized intersectionality to largely focus on the lived experiences of gender and race, there is a further need to explore the interlocking oppressions of sexuality and race to extend the theory. Black feminist author Jewelle Gomez, along with Barbara Smith, describes her experiences as a black lesbian by stating, "In the black community I was/am still a peculiar individual; a black lesbian is more often seen through than seen. I understood the need not to speak of sexuality in the black community" (172). Gomez explains

her intersectional experience as combative, forcing her to silence her sexual identity to benefit her race. The silencing of sexuality in racial voices is particularly pertinent to a study of a gay U.S. Civil Rights leader. Beyond the personal iterations critical legal scholar Margaret Russell examines discourse which compares race and sexuality concluding “Unlike comparisons between race and gender, disability, or age, the attempted use of analogies between race and sexual orientation has engendered fierce controversy bordering on enmity” (37). Feminist scholar Barbara Smith connects with Russell’s sentiment and argues that “for the first time the relationship between the African American and lesbian and gay communities is being widely debated both within and outside movement circles...however the group least consulted about their perspectives are the one’s most deeply affected by it: black lesbian and gay activists” (19). Smith’s statement shows that despite engagement of race and gender sexuality remains a primary source for intersectional analysis.

Further, though feminist scholars such as bell hooks and Audre Lourde have articulated the lived experiences of queer women of color, there is a lack of scholarship on the historical framing of queer men of color and the ways in which hegemonic masculinity and whiteness marginalizes these figures. Legal scholar Jeffery Mingo affirms “the gay man of color must identify with one group than the other, despite the fact that he cannot fit comfortably within either” (562). Professor of critical legal studies Peter Kwan adds that more explorations of race and sexuality need to take place, noting the power of intersectionality in “the recovery of claims and identities” (Kwan 1275). Kwan suggests critical theories of intersectionality "be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and color"(1276). Likewise, this project argues for an expanded version of intersectional rhetorical criticism that includes the way

race and sexual orientation construct representational intersections about the experiences of a gay leader in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.

Public Memory

Prior to an attempt to queer public memory it is imperative to briefly explore the literature surrounding public memory. Initially, a distinction between public memory and history is necessary. History implies a “singular and authentic account of the past,” in which multiple perspectives, ideologies, and interpretations are flattened to a narrow and flat approximation of reality (Phillips 2). Conversely, memory is “conceived in terms of multiple, diverse, mutable, and competing accounts of past events” memory allows for a converging and contestation of the past” (Phillips 2). Public memory retains duality in that it “is both attached to a past and acts to ensure a future remembering of that same event” (Casey 17). Barbie Zelizer identified “collective memory,” as that which contains “collective actions determined and shaped by the group” for the purpose of “identity formation, power, authority, cultural norms, and social integration” (214). I agree with what Zelizer has outlined as a social trajectory in which social movements utilize collective memory with the goal of piecing together the mosaic of images into a picture of what the group becomes over time (227).

Zelizer places contemporary memory studies into six basic premises. Initially, public memory is procedural – meaning that “memory is a process that is constantly unfolding changing and transforming” (Zelizer 218). As we remember, we produce and transform those memories we recall at the same time (Zelizer 218). Public memory is also unpredictable, meaning in the sense that it is not “linear, logical, or rational” (Zelizer 221). “We are unable to predict the instances in which memory takes on new transformations” (221). In this way, our past retains a spectral-like quality: always looming, threatening, and eventually erupting into contemporary

consciousness. Thus, rhetoricians must take caution and critique the constructions of our memory when they make themselves known. Much of this concern stems from the notion that collective memory lacks association with time and chronology, insinuating that memory often serves a constitutive effect when time no longer allows groups the ability to interact (Zelizer 222). This is made effectively clear through retrospective nominalization- the renaming of early events issues or places in accordance with other events (222). Third, public memory is partial as it fails to contain holistic identities but are “pieced together like a mosaic” (Zelizer 224). Memory is also useable in that “collective memory is evaluated for the ways in which it helps us to make connections to each other over space and time” (Zelizer 226). Therefore, public memory offers a rhetorical tool that must continually be sharpened and examined before use.

In addition, public memory is both particular and universal. The paradox here is that collective memory serves as “particular representations of the past for some groups while taking on universal significance for others” (Zelizer, 230). For example in queer rhetorical scholarship the memory of the Matthew Shepard murder takes on particular meaning, while the dominant public signifies a universal tale of bullying and assault (Zelizer 226). Finally, collective memory is material, meaning it exists in the world and requires expression “outside one’s head” (Zelizer 232). In the end, public memory often requires a cultural analysis to explore the “artifacts that mark its existence” (Zelizer 232).

Other scholars have explored the means through which public memory is subject to forms of revision. For instance, rhetorician Edward Casey argues through his study of Vietnam that the public examines an event in public memory through “first a discovery of a glaringly false part of its content” and through “a reassessment of its primary significance as a wider, or simply different, ethical or historical context arises” (Casey 29). In their rhetorical analysis of historical

attractions, Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair, and Brian Ott explain that symbols must be charged with emotion in order to become memory and provide for how memorials and historical attractions form a rhetoric of semiotics (Dickinson et al. 16).

Queering Rhetorical Scholarship

While research encourages the study of memory that evokes emotion, I contend there is a greater need to explore the symbols of sexuality, specifically incorporating elements of queer theory into the rhetoric of public address. Literature connecting queer theory and rhetorical scholarship demonstrates a myriad of emerging themes concerning queer rhetoric, LGBTQ historiography, silencing and erasure, as well as attempts to enact queer history for contemporary purposes. Morris argues that rhetoric provides ample evidence of being gendered, raced, and classed, but “it has yet to be queered” (Morris *Queering* 4). Morris maintains that traditional studies of rhetoric principally regard the figure of straight white males, thus ignoring others who fail to fit the rhetorical mold. Further, despite the success in other areas of transforming the discipline, sexuality remains a silent figure within our conceptions of discourse. A queer form of inquiry interrogates sexuality and public address and shows, “the consequential privileges bequeathed under the guise of sexual normalcy, this historically situated intersecting discourses that constituted normalcy and queerness” (Morris *Queering* 7). Morris provides a definition of “queering” that is particularly applicable to rhetorical studies by suggesting “the instantiation of sexuality is indispensable to the study of public address and a commitment to destabilizing sexual normalcy in its various continent manifestations” (Morris *Queering* 5). In this sense, to queer is to expose the sexual binaries and constraints of heterosexism and homophobia as represented and reified through public discourse. However, Rustin must be understood beyond the frames of either his sexuality or his race. Instead, I examine the many instances in which

Rustin's enmeshed race and sexuality challenged whiteness and straightness throughout his rhetorical contributions.

In addition to a focus on queer rhetoric in general, rhetorical theories can be "queered" and explored to uncover how a focus of sexuality impacts traditional aspects of rhetorical scholarship. Karen Foss' extension of Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation to the rhetoric of gay activist Harvey Milk argues that Bitzer's theory has heuristic value "beyond mainstream contexts" (Foss 75). The focus of sexuality on queer rhetors constructs multiple interpretations of his or her rhetorical situation ranging from a rhetor significant for achieving "firsts" to an audience "enacting homophobic hegemony of the times" (Foss 75). Further "the queer rhetor asks society to confront sexuality and the place of identity issues in politics which creates a distinctive standpoint in how the rhetoric is understood"(Foss 77). Studies such as these highlight the value of applying queer theory to traditional theories of public address to uncover the multiple intersections and interpretations available to rhetorical critics

Gay History vs. Queer History

Beyond the application of sexuality to public address, it is imperative to explore how sexuality is grafted onto history and scripted through our constructions of the past. As previously discussed, construction of a queer past is a necessary endeavor in establishing useful rhetorical theories and praxis for a queer future. Yet, exactly how that past is constructed is a point of contention within LGBTQ history, historiography, and queer rhetorical scholarship. Initial interrogations of the past struggled with a game of 'whose queer is it anyway' in which scholars participated in an essential 'outing' of public figures. For example, in her study of Eleanor Roosevelt, rhetorical scholar Dana Cloud questions who from the past counts as queer, and for whom does queer memory function in relation to visibility within the public sphere. Cloud attests

“there is a powerful sense in which breaking historical silences makes a significant contribution to criticism, pedagogy and politics” (Cloud 24). While scholarship must concern itself with breaking silences it is imperative to recover the historical voices we lost.

Research shows that there are two forms of recovery for queer historical work, an assimilationist paradigm and a more queer-centered separatist thinking (Cloud 25). In his study of gay and lesbian sexualities, conservative Andrew Sullivan argues that gay and lesbian rights are won through an assimilationist demonstration of similarity, a statement to a dominant public of “we are like you” (25). In this sense, claiming the sexuality of historical figures allows gays and lesbians to script the ethos of those figures across their contemporary identities. This form of historiography can also be considered “affirmative history” which seeks to “confirm contemporary gay and lesbian identity by search for moments of pride and past resistance” to serve as a model for contemporary homosexual living (Love 487-519). Gay and lesbian literary theorist Heather Love uses the critical gay and lesbian response to *The Well of Loneliness*, “one of the novels most hated by lesbians themselves” and accounts for how gay and lesbian narratives came to conflict with contemporary gay identity (488). Love argues that the “need to turn the difficulties of gay, lesbian, and transgender history to good political use in the present has resulted in a lack of attention to specificity and density of historical pasts” (491). However, tracing the histories of gay and lesbian public figures comes with a problematic cost.

For instance, Cloud outlines the study of queer historical figures to note that historical accounts of “great” LGBTQ figures are placed within contexts that are palatable to heteronormative audiences, thereby undermining gay history’s potential to create counterpublic discourses (25). This is further exemplified by the recent turn in LGBTQ centered movements to shift the historical lens from the gay figure as solitary to the gay figure as coupled which creates

an even more evasive stigma on uncoupled gay individuals (Smith & Windes 63). Cloud rightly charges that the study of gay and lesbian political figures “privileges gays and lesbians who otherwise do not contest normative social, political and economic boundaries” (25). A rhetorical past that focuses entirely on establishing an assimilationist ethos for contemporary gays and lesbians is in danger of creating token figures whose history is used to reify dominant social structures. Thus, our pasts need not be solely gay or lesbian, but instead must take the turn to a queer history.

The distinction from a gay and lesbian centered historical past to a queer frame is a complex weaving of social and political forces that continues to combat and contest one another. First, gay and lesbian history carries a continual focus on trauma, loss and shock. Love attests to this stigma explaining, “one of the central paradoxes of queer studies is that its dreams for a better future are founded on a history of suffering, stigma, and violence” (491). In a critique of Love’s arguments on the power of isolation in LGBTQ discourse, comparative literature scholar Susan Lanser questions what do we lose through identities forged from trauma and “an ethic of suffering” (545). Rhetoricians Brian Ott and Eric Aoki concur with queer memory’s continual construction of guilt and shame. In a media analysis of the framing of Matthew Shepard, they propose that the media “alleviate the public’s guilt concerning anti-gay hate crimes through scapegoating” (Ott and Aoki 483). Further, Cloud’s conceptualization of the public memory of Eleanor Roosevelt argues that a gay and lesbian identity’s continued focus on outing historical “renders queerness as a matter of secrecy, trapping a public in voyeurism rather than enabling critical reflection” (31). This dichotomy insinuates a rhetoric in which society “politicizes the personal” instead of personalize the political” (Cloud 32).

The framing of gay and lesbian history minimizes the potential for contemporary queer rhetoric by continually acknowledging homosexuality in a “scandal frame that still serves to discredit it” (Cloud 38). These stigmas may come as a result of the intervention of rhetorical critics whose primary concern are “contests over the definition of identity, historical forces that shape these contests, and the antagonistic genealogies of specific identities” in essence creating a myth of a singular gay identity (Smith and Windes 63). It is important to remember that conceiving of any identity with a single audience “oversimplifies” and essentializes the varied and diverse dynamics of public and counterpublics (Pezzulo 362). Instead, we must deconstruct the impossible notion of a single history of a LGBTQ identity but rather enact and trace the formation and contestation of those identities over time. Still, other scholars affirm that rhetoricians “transcend the search for a gay past that is limited to the identification of historic actors with same sex desire” (Thompson 135). Critical gaze must shift to texts that contest heteronormative coercive structures.

Second, the continued negative valence of historical accounts of LGBTQ individuals, in addition to the employment of erasure, bars queer rhetors from memory as an effective rhetorical tool. If queer rhetoric makes use of tropes and narratives that glosses queer sexuality with negative valences, it threatens to reinforce the social structures against which it seeks to rebel. Morris affirms this separation from a queer past by proclaiming “fractured by sexual practice, generation, race, class and organizations, haunted still by stigma, disease, and the legacy of the closet gay men often find memory remote debilitated and irrelevant” (“My Old Kentucky” 95). Related to this idea, professor of queer studies Michael Warner notes “queers do not have the institutions for common memory and generation transmission around which straight culture is built” (Warner 111). Further studies on the public memory, in the case of AIDS discourse, focus

on the power and implications of sub cultural or countercultural identity in queer rhetoric. Christopher Castiglia's argument on "Sex Panics, Sex Public, Sex Memories" suggests that access to public memory are often conflated within access to public spaces. Castiglia's study of AIDS narratives and the sex panics of a post AIDS culture exposes an "counternostalgia" which looks back at the sexual "excesses" of a diseased pre-AIDS generation which serves the interests of a dominant public (160).

Some neoconservative gay rights activists suggest that queer memory creates a traumatic past producing a stigma that encourages sexual liberation at the exclusion of all else ("California Schools to Teach Gay History"). This conceptualizes a queer memory that denies the multiplicity and dimensions of LGBTQ experience. Castiglia elaborates that "sexual consciousness that emerges from such narratives of forgetting and memory serve state interests"(160). These acts of forgetting distance LGBTQ individuals from dominant judgments claiming, "if sexual revolution caused illness, and one distances oneself from the sexual revolution [gays and lesbians] are distanced from the illness" (Castiglia 161). This form of counternostalgia is dangerous because "it represents the past inaccurately but also limits the present options for non normative identification, intimacy and pleasure" (Castiglia 161).

Beyond counternostalgia, queer memory also faces the challenges of erasure. Morris's imagining of the potential for a queer Abraham Lincoln provides a significant example of the way sexuality can be purged from public memory. Morris terms "mnemonicide" as the assassination of memory as a homophobic response to queer impasses into memory (*Queering* 103). Fearing a queer Lincoln, historians have created an assassination of access to queer memory in limiting what we deem as queer, thus denying access to a queer history (*Queering* Morris 106-108). As historians obscure the nature of sexuality in prominent figures, it prevents

queer memory from drawing from public figures who are not defined as expressly gay or lesbian. Queer theorists Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner argue that the purpose of defining “normal intimacy” has never been to reflect “an accurate description of how people actually live” (559). Instead, the purpose of constituting what it means to have normal sexual behavior in the public sphere is to “prevent the recognition, memory, elaboration, or institutionalization of all the nonstandard intimacies that people have in everyday life” (Berlant and Warner 560). Public memory and public amnesia of sexuality serves to fit dominant pathologies and fears quipping, “Memory is the amnesia you like” (Berlant and Warner 549). This form of erasure is also found within what historical archives deem as important. As queer theorist Judith Halberstam comments, “the archive is not simply a repository; it is also a theory of cultural relevance, a construction of collective memory and a complex record of queer activity” (169-170). Morris encourages a “shift from effective history to affective history which is to say that the focus not only concerns sexuality in its time but also how those pasts are taken up contingently across time” (“Sexuality” 402). LGBTQ historians have labored to discover a past that both founds queer memory and dismantles the myths that have trivialized and scapegoat homosexuals into obscurity. It is no wonder that Morris implores, “to survive, [gays and lesbians] must learn to remember” (“Archival Queer” 110).

Queer Memory

While gay and lesbian history present troubles of trauma and heteronormativity, I attempt here to assemble the characteristics of a ‘queer’ enactment of memory. Cloud insists that instead of a focus on individuals who happen to be gay and lesbian, “rhetoricians can queer the public’s knowledge and memory of them” by creating “new meanings of their private and public lives to shape how they are remembered and encourage the public reflections on the conditions of

possibility for particular kinds of figures” (24). This conception of queerness as “a challenge to heteronormative social structures” requiring both visibility and advocacy proposes a key component of queerness in the development of subaltern identity out of shared experience of oppression (Cloud 29). Queer memories must be distinct from “gay” memories, which graft a terminology that did not exist onto conceptions of the past. Thus, I accept Cloud’s assertion that to be queer one must have a “structural relationship to heteronormativity and have suffered from it” and apply this concept to the rhetoric of Rustin (Cloud 29). Love’s conception of a distinction between gay and queer historiography indicates that LGBTQ history searches for positive moments of intersection as a model for the modern homosexual whereas queer historiography, in contrast, chooses instead to focus on “the effects of homophobia in a range of historical contexts” (Love 492). To put it another way, affirmative memory invites a call to say, here we are, we exist! A queer memory points the critical finger and says, ‘here, this is where you lost us, this is where we might have been.’ This distinction is important for queer centered individuals as it creates an ontology that assumes we have always been present, but more importantly we have always been contested.

Attempts to articulate a queer form of public memory are often contested and combated, however, they carry the potential for queer liberation and access to a rhetorical, as well as historical, past. Rhetorician Thomas Dunn explores the notion of queer memory through “contested memory frames” in his analysis of public memories of Matthew Shepard within the LGBTQ community and argues for “strategic use of public memories by counterpublics” (“Remembering” 612). Dunn concludes that queer enactments of public memory “challenge what it means to be gay in the twenty first century” (“Remembering” 612). Dunn’s suggestion is key to a formation of queer memory as he amends a unique place for marginalized groups in

resisting dominant discourse through a counterpublic memory. Dunn's work contends, "public memories are not only the province of powerful normative forces and institutions but also strategic rhetorical resources for marginalized groups to engage publics and counterpublics" ("Remembering" 613). Dunn notes that queer memories are almost exclusively counterpublic memories suggesting a resistive quality for queer memory that "can shift the locus of memory's rhetorical study from reactions to oppressive metanarratives to the creations of contrary telling of the past" ("Remembering" 638). Memory then, like the rhetorical canon of ancient Greece, remains a valuable tool for LGBTQ people to urge cultural and political change (Dunn, "Remembering" 615).

The resistive power of queer memory is also established through counter memories and a focus on the materials of queer public memories. Scholars have noted that the most "effective response to counternostalgia is counter memory," and call for remembrance outside the normative frames of "official" histories (Castiglia 168). In her work on the memories of National Breast Cancer awareness month, rhetoric and popular culture scholar Phaedra Pezzulo argues that memory can serve as a form of resistive reading, or the reclaiming of power through "developing counter memories, giving them revolutionary quality" (Pezzulo 440). Thus, the resistive power of queer memory is present in its very purpose which "is not just to destigmatize those average intimacies, not just to give access to the sentimentality of the couple for persons of the same sex, and definitely not to certify as properly private the personal lives of gays and lesbians. Rather, it is to support forms of affective, erotic, and personal living that are public in the sense of accessible, available to memory, and sustained through collective activity" (Berlant and Warner 562). Communication scholar Reta Whitlock's interdisciplinary memory study of rural life in Northern Alabama elaborates, "remembrance of the queer and/or by the queer is a

disruptive, rather than a diagnostic tool” (99). In essence, Whitlock testifies to the transformative power of a queer centered study of memory.

Similarly, critical performance studies scholar Fiona Buckland asserts a distinction between places of memory, which encompass a static formation, and the preferred “theatres of memory in which the past is preformed – reinterpreted and restored through being retold by narrative and by movement” (Buckland 20). Buckland compares self generated topographies of New York City made by members of Chelsea’s queer communities to official ‘gay maps’ of Chelsea to highlight “the disparity between history as it is discursively inscribed and memory as the bodies that bear the consequences both of its inscription and its remembrance embody and perform it” (Buckland 20). Buckland asserts that “places of memory” like stonewall fall victim to capitalist commodification as evidenced by a souvenir industry around stonewall. Buckland’s study provides a warning to the creation of an “official” queer history, which by its static nature undoes the very definition of queer. My thesis applies Dunn and Buckland’s assertions through a rhetorical analysis of Rustin’s remembrances as a potential site for counterpublic and queer memory.

The discourse of queer memory, like that of public memory in general, also remains concerned with materiality. Dunn’s 2011 study of a “great fag” through the statue of “gay pioneer” Alexander Wood explores the material and visual substance of queer memory projects. Dunn attempts to connect the threads of how acts of public memory “constitutes an official memory sanctioned within both the gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, and heterosexual communities (“Great Fag” 437). Dunn asserts that the materiality of memory holds significance for queer individuals as “the past operates not as historical fact but as historical interpretation for the purposes of making public argument” (“Great Fag” 439). This form of materiality is constructed

through moving beyond vernacular and verbal discourse but through a foray into the statues and plates of commemorative sites, which offer an escape from “the danger to forget” (Dunn “Great Fag” 453). However, it is precisely the vernacular and verbal memories in which the construction of a queer past obtains its fruition. Statues and plates may inscribe a permanent and fixed rhetorical space but our critical gaze must turn towards the battlefield of ideas through which words and ideas are formed long before they are literally set in stone. Thus, the focus of this thesis also relies on a discourse of verbal memory as opposed to material concerns alone.

Memory of The U.S. Civil Rights Movement

Further, studies in the memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement provide an array of rhetorical implications that foreground a study into the U.S. Civil Rights memory of Rustin. Specifically, appropriations of the memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement provide a theoretical connection to social change, create master narratives for dominant publics, and provide a problematic representation of the movements goals.

Initially, Political scientist Fredrick Harris employs an analysis of opinion surveys taken from 1966, along with Halbwachs’ theory of collective memory, to argue the importance of public memory to collective social movements. Harris articulates how “events evolve into collective memories and how collective memories are then incorporated into a group’s repertoire of memories, and how collective memories may be later employed for collective action” (Harris 21). Harris proposes a theory of collective memory and collective action that attempts to answer “why some events become part of a group’s repertoire of memories while other events of the past remain dormant” (Harris 22). This is significant in that it draws on how the rhetorical options of the present can be navigated with assistance from interpretive movements of the past (22).

Harris suggests that an event triggers the process of social appropriation in which social actors “interpret whether environmental conditions pose either an opportunity of a threat to collective action” (22). Following this the events trigger collective action through “framing” which allows the memories to be packaged for employment in the present (Harris 23). At this stage there exists an opportunity for collective action frames to “transform symbols of threat into symbols of political opportunity” (Harris 23). Harris traces the various attempts and re-appropriating the memories of The Scottsboro Boys and how their memories held little correlation to public action “making it difficult for movement entrepreneurs to re-appropriate the event as a symbol of racial injustice by the time of the Civil Rights movement” (32).

Appropriation of collective memory becomes a vital tool for theories of collective action in that “memory processes sustain the memory of the event over time, allowing the event, now a collective memory, to publicly resurface as political actors re-appropriate it to build lines of solidarity and forge strategies for collective action” (Harris 38). Thus, Harris argues that memories are inextricably linked with appropriation as an effort to coalesce different social groups. Harris’ theory provides a framework for understanding the micro-dynamics of queer memory. A theory of collective memory and collective action is particularly applicable to this study in which follows the appropriation of Rustin’s memory to forge strategies between the African American community and Gay Rights activism.

Beyond appropriation, the memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement often creates a narrative that is palatable to the dominant public at the cost of more radical sects of its memory. Historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall critiques the narratives of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in public memory to argue “the master narrative simultaneously elevates and diminishes the movement” thus preventing “one of the most remarkable mass movements in American history

from speaking effectively to the challenges of our time” (1234). Hall charts how the U.S. Civil Rights Movement became “distilled from history and memory, twisted by ideology and political contestation and embedded in heritage tours, museums, public rituals and various artifacts of mass culture” and argues that “remembrance is always a form forgetting” (1233). Hall traces the many distortions of memory to explain how the complexity and radicalism of U.S. Civil Rights activism became flattened into a safe and passive narrative of a movement with a beginning and an end. This “beginning” is articulated as the “classical” phase of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as beginning with *Brown v Board of Education* proceeds through public protests, and culminates with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964” (1234). In this construction, forms of radical protest, such as advocacy for socialism and unionization or the speeches of Martin Luther King against Vietnam, are destabilized and removed from the memory supported by the master narrative.

Further, Hall critiques the various narratives of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement that are repeated in dominant contemporary America that strengthen the trope of the south as “the nation’s opposite other,” as well as the various ways in which the dominant narrative elides the multiple class and gender struggles and achievements the movement encompassed (1239). For example, the 1963 March on Washington is constructed as a march for racial equality rather than its intended mission as a “march for jobs and freedom,” thus occluding the numerous women who linked racial class and gender divides paving the ways for social movements of the future (1253). Hall roots this critique by founding the memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement within the rise of a the medium of television in which activists success was directly proportional to the images they could manifest of black oppression at the hands of whites. As television was a new medium, Hall argues, the images have little to no precedent leading to a false memory of

these oppositional events as new (Hall 1236). In the hands of the New Right, the memory of U.S. Civil Rights was constructed as aiming towards colorblindness and the “elimination of racial classifications and the establishment of formal equality before the law was the movement’s singular objective” (Hall 1237).

These master narratives are problematic to the discourses of public memory. The U.S. Civil Rights Movement is not an easily defined narrative confined to a single leader, decade, or set of aims. Instead, Hall advocates for the collective memory of a “long Civil Rights movement” in which radical and liberal ideologies coalesced in the late 1930’s, “accelerated during World War II, stretched beyond the south, was continuously and ferociously contested and in the 1960s inspired a movement of movements that defies any narrative of collapse” (1235) Hall’s essay is significant in that she articulates the many ways in which U.S. Civil Rights memory flattened the micro-narratives of individual causes, leaders and success into a more digestible form for the white middle class.

As a victim of this “master narrative” Rustin’s erasure from public memory and his subsequent rebirth in the hands of gay rights activists becomes an important battleground to understand how social movements can constrain the very people and ideas they claim to represent. Understanding how the past embeds itself onto the present allows us to “cut through the miasma of evasion and confusion that cripples our creativity” and makes available new modes of activism and liberation (Hall 1262). In this study I shall attempt to situate what Hall calls “the sine qua non of narrative while also dramatizing the hidden history of policies and institutions” by focusing on the erasure of Rustin from the collective consciousness of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (Hall 1262).

Memory serves a quintessential function of intergenerational inheritance by activists in which the next generation is passed down traditions of struggle (Isaac 50). Collective memory then creates a “cultural production of movement poetics” that “is often about making the past for purposes of struggles in the present” (Isaac 50). Sociologist Larry Isaac argues “cultures of movements past” are continually and continuously repeated, “sometimes leading to a dominant movement story that gets replicated in multiple cultural contexts” (51). Implying that memory of social movements can be used to reinforce those aspects that comport to dominant narratives. Isaac positions how U.S. Civil Rights memory helped progress the racial equality through the appointment of black elected officials (Isaac 54). Historian Francesca Polletta’s content analysis of the Congressional Record agrees with Isaac’s summation in recounting the various ways the memory of Martin Luther King was articulated by black congressmen and women in the 1990s (479). Isaac constitutes memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as sectional, occurring solely in the south, and with a specific beginning and end points in time. In addition, he articulates that the memory of the movement is gendered, classless, and canonizes movement figures such as Dr. Martin Luther King at the exclusion of all else (Isaac 51-52).

Literary theorist Christopher Metress shares concern with Hall and Isaac that U.S. Civil Rights histories have become infected with sites of “emplotment” through “events made into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain events and the highlighting of others, by characterization, motif repetition, variation of tone and point of view, alternate descriptive passages and the like” (140). However, unlike Hall, Metress attempts to make “Civil Rights harder” by focusing on “how movement histories operate as emplotted narratives” (140). Metress juxtaposes the memory of Birmingham in the summer of 1963 in both Martin Luther King’s 1964 memoir and Anthony Groom’s 2001 novel to present a case for an “alternative Civil Rights

narrative”(140). His primary purpose is to advance a claim “for how literary representations of the movement are a valuable and untapped legacy” for understanding the production of memory (Metress 141). This claim is important to the foreground of Rustin’s discourse as I, like Metress, attempt to explore contemporary appropriations of Rustin’s memory through the documentary “Brother Outsider” to discover productions of memory.

The relationship that memories of the past have to shaping the present is of chief concern to the studies of sociologists Larry Griffin and Kenneth Bolen. Yet, their approach to memory studies takes a different tactic, focusing entirely on how “people use the past-as-memory to make sense of and act on the present” (595). Griffin recounts the importance of U.S. Civil Rights memory to African American populations during years of consecutive surveying despite more pressing concerns such as 9/11. For instance, in a 2004 study Griffin found that half of African Americans surveyed named U.S. Civil Rights as the most important event of the past 50-70 years (Griffin,548). Griffin and Bolen argue that that the U.S. Civil Rights success as a memory comes from its ability to frame “its opponents, strategies, and goals in terms of America’s creedal ideals of unity, fairness, and equality” (597). U.S. Civil Rights are positioned as a righteous cause, employed through unpolluted tactics, with large success (Griffin and Bolen 597). They support their claim through analysis of a 1993 general social survey to propose 5 possibilities for the effect of Civil Rights memory. Specifically, Civil Rights memories increase awareness and sensitivity of racial disparities, “provide historical precedent for efficacy of ameliorative...action to redress racial inequalities”, emphasize the need for racial healing, signify creedal notions, and trigger guilt among whites to “atone for a shameful past” (Griffin and Bolen 601-602). When taken together, these findings reinforce the multiple meanings and interpretations that the U.S. Civil Rights Movement can rhetorically construct, thus further

creating impetus for excavating these memories and the ways in which they are co-opted today for contemporary purposes.

The physical space of Civil Rights memorials, such as the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, were configured to “deal explicitly with Birmingham’s past and to reinforce present and future progress” (Gallagher 308). These memorials depict the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as a story with a finite ending and fail to invite discussion or discourse of dissent. Rhetorician Victoria Gallagher’s analysis of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute offers that Civil Rights memory advances and encourages ideals which are no longer as popular as they were in the 1960s, specifically nonviolent direct action (211). Her essay proves useful in its deconstruction of Civil Rights memory from the racial problems of today, suggesting that “black experiences and history are acceptable to the extent that they emphasize problems of the past in terms of progress rather than current failings”(Gallagher 316). Further the voices of individuals of positions “differing from current political reality” are silenced and ignored in Civil Rights memorials, focusing instead on only those who now hold upstanding civic engagements (Gallagher 317). While Gallagher suggests that Civil Rights memory is a “place for experiencing reconciliation and regeneration rather than conflict and debate,” her work leaves a gap in articulating those voices repressed by the memory of progress. In critiquing how the narrative creates constraints it is important then to revive those leaders and discourse that allows for such contestation. This, I argue is, where a project centered on Rustin is key on theoretical, historical, and political grounds regarding Civil Rights memory in particular.

After reviewing the literature concerning intersectionality, public memory, the queering of public address, queer memory, and memory of the Civil Rights movement it is important to apply these concepts to a theoretical framework with which to analyze the discourse and memory

of Bayard Rustin. First, Rustin's rise to success and eventual separation from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement leadership provides a juncture with which to analyze the heteronormative discourse of his time. This project explains the various forces of constraint at work for a gay Civil Rights leader, thus Rustin potentially fits Cloud's demand for queer rhetors to have a relationship with heteronormative forces. Further, the historical treatment of Rustin within the context of his biography allows the incorporation of Castiglia's theories of erasure. Second, elements of Carrie Crenshaw's intersectional rhetorical criticism will be applied to Rustin's discourses to search for rhetorical tactics that develop intersectional spaces. Finally, Dunn's theory of counter memory will be applied to contemporary discourse, including a biographical documentary and high school curricula, in order to revive and recirculate the resistive power of Rustin's memory for African American and LGBT identities. When taken together these theoretical frameworks offer a fitting lens to remember and resuscitate the rhetoric of Bayard Rustin.

CHAPTER 3

A TIME ON TWO CROSSES: RUSTIN'S INTERSECTIONAL CONTEXTS

Through the convergence of memory, intersectionality, and queer public address this chapter provides context to situate Rustin's intersectional identities. As presented in Chapter Two this study employs multiple methodologies to explore the intersections and complications of Rustin's memory. Principally the present chapter gathers a review of academic scholarship to examine Rustin as a rhetor through the context of his racial and sexual identities. I argue that Rustin's sexuality is situated within the literature as an unspoken reality that continually threatened to expose itself, a danger to his achievements within his time, and a constraint on his memory and legacy for future audiences. Before addressing this literature, it becomes necessary to consider the impact of the emphasis on Rustin as a "queer" figurehead. Transposing the language of modern frameworks such as "queer" and "gay" on top of a temporal space in which those words and concepts could not exist is a tricky endeavor. Of this point, John D'Emilio argued in his evaluation of gay history that the "steady focus on gayness – either gay life or gay oppression – threatens to obscure the bulk of gay historical experience" ("Homophobia" 81). In undergoing a project of queering public address the choice of texts and discourse of queer rhetors becomes an obstacle to be overcome. Must we only explore discourse that is overtly queer, or does the mere knowledge of a rhetor's sexual identity dictate whether we can canonize him or her in the context of queer public address? D'Emilio suggests that should we privilege only queer centered texts we end up minimizing the contributions of these individuals; instead we must allow assessment of "how these men have been oppressed"(D'Emilio "Homophobia" 80).

Given these concerns it is vital to critique rhetorically a variety of discourse that fall both in and out of homosexual conditions. D'Emilio provides support for undergoing projects that focus on gay rhetors outside the contexts of particularly gay rights discourse. As scholars have noted, most figures we deem as gay “have not led- gay centered social lives, and even those who do will have passed much of their time – in work, politics, worship, voluntary associations and civic affairs in non-gay contexts” (D'Emilio, “Homophobia” 82). Including a focus on Rustin’s discourse and advocacy for racial equality, peace, and gay rights allows scholarship to connect the rhetorical strategies of a variety of social movements. Juxtaposing Rustin’s history and memory with his sexuality results in intriguing and combative rhetorical constraints

Unspoken Identity

Initially, Rustin’s sexuality is situated within the literature as an unspoken, but not unacknowledged, aspect of his identity. In his detailed biography of Rustin, D'Emilio traces the consequences of Rustin’s sexuality as it relates to his contributions and personal life. Rustin was often adept at “deflecting questions away from his personal matters, to construct a life story that gave no notices to the shaping forces of gay oppression” (*Lost Prophet* 28). Much of what is publicly known of Rustin’s personal sexual orientation was collected later in life when, pressed by the politics of his partner Walter Naegle, Rustin formally spoke out on his own sexuality (Podair 105) in public speeches, interviews and conference lectures (Carbado and Weise 1193). Scholars differ as to whether he “discovered” his sexual identity at age 14 (Levine 45), or whether it manifested itself during his time at Wilberforce University in Ohio (Haskins, 14). What is concrete is that his family was aware of his homosexual orientation (Haskins 15, D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 27). His identity as a religious Quaker, a tradition that stresses equality, pacifism, and individual enlightenment, would play a significant part of his politics as well as his

sexuality. In keeping with Quaker beliefs, his family at home seemed to acknowledge and accept the fact that he was not heterosexual, yet cautioned that he “be careful to associate with people who have as much to lose as you have” (D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet* 29). In a particularly poignant example of his family’s advice, Rustin would later recount that two male students in this class “were fairly outrageous creatures. . . .whose flamboyance made them social outcasts” (D’Emilio, *Lost Prophet* 28). Rustin admitted to a colleague how his sexual awareness drove him towards a stronger attempt to affirm his masculinity through athletics (Anderson 35).

In 1932, Rustin left home to attend Wilberforce University in Ohio where his sexuality made itself a persistent problem when a relationship with the son of the college president caused his early departure. Shortly after, as a student of Cheney State Teachers College in Pennsylvania, Rustin engaged in several homosexual relationships that proved problematic including, a sexual encounter with a white male at a local golf course. Rustin was severely punished for the incident, while nothing happened to the white male. As a person of interest in the local community of a small town, once Rustin’s heterosexuality became publicly compromised he left his home in Pennsylvania home for New York City in the fall of 1937 (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 30).

A Home in Harlem

Rustin’s next move (to Harlem) would come to serve as a proving ground for him as both an activist and a gay public intellectual. Carbado and Weise account for Rustin’s time in Harlem as an introduction to gay social expression and a chance to enthusiastically exercise social codes of African American elites “where lesbians and gay men were accepted so long as they did not flaunt their sexuality in ways that undermined black respectability” (1145). An excerpt from D’Emilio’s biography typifies the queer intersections of race and sexuality prevalent in Harlem at the time:

Besides the creativity to be found in Harlem, Bayard had at his disposal the thriving ‘gay’ or “queer” subculture that overlapped spatially with his other worlds. Drag balls, rent parties, and cabarets in Harlem, the street cruising scene along 42nd street in the theater district, the clubs in Greenwich Village: the neighborhoods and settings that sustained Bayard’s racial, political, and cultural identities also established his sexual desires to find expression. (*Lost Prophet* 30).

D’Emilio situates Rustin’s experience of Harlem to point out that the “in the life” culture of 1940s Harlem had many known overtures to queer sexuality, however public discussion of it was largely discouraged. Barbara Smith describes the attitude towards homosexuality within the black community of the time as a “play it don’t say it” mentality in which sexual prominence was fine as long as there were no outward expressions of it (49). In addition to the expectations of silence, in Harlem, Rustin was presented with a model for racial and sexual identity through Alain Locke the black, gay Howard University professor “whose sexual identity defined neither who he was nor with whom he associated” (Carbado and Weiss 1146). Locke and Rustin developed a friendship through which Rustin learned much about public articulations of sexuality. In a similar fashion, Rustin never gave a public declaration, nor verbalized his gayness, yet it remained ever present.

Rustin’s time in Harlem would activate the formation of not only his sexual circles but his political affiliations as well. In *Lost Prophet*, D’Emilio provides a review of the more general accomplishments of Rustin in the early 1950s including his often critiqued connections to the American Communist Party. Rustin’s association with communist political groups came as a result of witnessing the party’s defense of racial discrimination prior to WWII. Still, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Rustin was encouraged to pull back on his racial justice campaigns, which resulted in his suspicion and later resignation from the party (35). Following his break with Communism, Rustin found mentorship under black socialist labor leader A. Phillip Randolph and the Fellowship of Reconciliation (hereafter FOR). In June of 1941 Rustin

became part of the FOR, an organization of Christian pacifists, where his principle assignment from leader A.J. Muste was the establishment of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the successful campaign to raise nonviolent action towards desegregation through the “Journey of Reconciliation.” In reviewing literature surrounding key figures of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement rhetorician Jeffery Kurtz seeks to establish “the burgeoning historical and critical treatments of the ideas, speeches, writings, people, and events who made the movement ‘move’” (329). Kurtz traces Rustin’s 1966 “Freedom Budget” from its inception to its immanent failure while praising the Civil Rights leader for creating an economic solution while his contemporaries were centered upon creating slogans of black power (337).

Nevertheless, these attempts to rise above the racial standards and to re-define the priorities of social movements are what make Rustin a unique rhetorical figure. As D’Emilio writes, “his failures were brilliant, his aims noble, his vision of a progressive politics compelling, especially when the goals that flowed from this vision upset friends, and colleagues. Rustin was a wonderful gadfly” (*Lost Prophet* 338). Even here, there is a defense that Rustin’s homosexuality “shaped his strategic thinking in the mid-1960s and conditioned the reactions of others to him” (D’Emilio “Homophobia” 83).

An Activist Through Fellowship

Rustin’s position as a gadfly was perpetuated through the ways his sexuality continued to collide with his political achievements. D’Emilio argues “the stigma that America society attached to sexual desires-made him forever vulnerable. Again and again, Rustin found his aspirations locked, his talents contained, and his influence marginalized” (*Lost Prophet* 5). Rustin’s sexuality was not necessarily a conflict between homosexual and heterosexual identity, rather, it was a battleground of public and private expression. During his years under Muste at

the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) in the 1940s his co-workers described Rustin as a person who people loved to love. Co-workers described his relationship to society as a “four way outsider” due to his status as a black man among a largely white organization, a Quaker among largely Baptist and Methodist traditions, a homosexual in a strictly heterosexual era, and a creative figure in a world of defined rules (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 65).

In 1943 Rustin began his relationship with Davis Platt, and put his homosexual relationship fully on display for the members of the FOR. D’Emilio sets up the fear that ignited from Rustin’s sexual desires as it intersected both racial and gender lines, attesting that Rustin’s primary erotic interest fell on white men which provided a first foray into how his race complicated notions of his sexuality (*Lost Prophet* 68). This intersection proved to be too much for the largely white male staff; however “sincere their commitments to social justice, the white staff members were not immune to three centuries of mythology about the sexual nature of African men” (*Lost Prophet* 67). When confronted with the disintegration of all social boundaries Rustin’s coworkers felt conflicted about a man with sexual interests that included them. While Platt frequented the offices of the FOR while in school, Muste discouraged him from maintaining a relationship with Bayard (*Lost Prophet* 71). Biographer Jervis Anderson writes that Rustin never really lived a closeted lifestyle, articulating that Rustin’s co-workers and mentors were never unaware of Rustin’s sexuality and only negated his orientation when it intersected with public law enforcement (155). Anderson’s account of Rustin’s sexual openness is significant because it differs from our conceptions of pre-Stonewall queer figureheads. He affirms Rustin’s frankness about his sexuality stemmed “from a feeling that he was entitled to be whatever he was, even at a time in American when homosexuality was prosecuted as a crime”

(155). This is a rhetorical position unique to gay and lesbian individuals and thus worthy of examining Rustin's discourse for other unique attributes relating to sexuality.

Rustin's sexuality often presented itself at the most inopportune times. For instance, during his incarceration for refusing to adhere to his military draft Rustin's various political moves to desegregate the prison systems were undermined when he was caught in sexual encounters with other inmates (Carbado and Weise 1152). In writing his mentor Muste, Rustin apologized for his failure and terms his sexuality as a "weakness" (Levine 45). Rustin's stance on his sexuality as personal failure became particularly evident during his period of incarceration in which his sexuality was a source of continual scrutiny. Rustin developed a secret code name, "Marie," for his lover Davis Platt to circumvent prison censorship (D'Emilio "Homophobia" 87). Much of this communication was obscured by the fact that these letters were presented to Muste. Thus, we can only assume that Rustin wrote not only for the eyes of his lover. In his letters Rustin expressed this internal conflict:

Is celibacy the answer? If so how can I develop an inner desire for it? I have a real desire for following another way but I have never had a desire to completely remove sex from my mind. What can celibacy become without such an inner desire? Does not holding Marie before me as an object toward whom I project these terrific impulses stifle the beam of light? (D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet* 87)

These letters complicate the conceptions of Rustin's sexuality as he discussed his own sexual conflict. He was caught in the middle between personal desire for same sex intimacy and the public constraint against it. In response, Muste simply replied "there are some limits to self-indulgence...for those who undertake to arouse their fellows to moral issue" (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 88). As a leader in a movement priding itself on temperance and self-discipline, Rustin blamed himself for not living up to the standard he preached.

While his sexuality was a problem for his earlier campaigns, the first major falling out and rejection of Rustin for his sexuality came during a conference trip to Pasadena, California in which he engaged in sex with two strangers outside his conference hotel. Police arrived on the scene and Rustin was placed in jail under “lewd conduct charges” (Carbado and Weise 1163). Following this incident, his political ties with FOR as well as his personal connection to Muste was formally severed. Rustin was forced to realize that his sexuality must be cast aside for the sake of the work he attempted to accomplish. Drawing from interviews years later, a case was made that while heterosexual promiscuity was accepted and even encouraged within the rank and file of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Rustin’s modest homosexual acts were decried (Carbado and Weise 1173). Muste would eventually raise money from pacifist circles to finance Rustin’s therapy to handle the problem; concerns were raised as to whether Rustin’s sexuality could “easily coexist with his emerging leadership role” (Carbado and Weise 1139).

Public Trials and Contestations

While Rustin’s political accomplishments elevated him to the verge of greatness within the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, his sexuality eclipsed his orations. Rustin’s sexuality was continually contested through letter and law including from fellow African American leader Adam Clayton Powell who “was not prepared to have a queer radical usurp his role” (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 92). D’Emilio argues that Powell’s motivation for bringing Rustin’s sexuality into the forefront again centered on Powell’s own attempts to grab at the power Rustin amassed (*Lost Prophet* 92). In June of 1960 Rustin organized massive demonstrations around the Democratic National Convention. At this point, Powell unleashed what he believed to be a masterstroke at discrediting Rustin. Publicly, he demeaned the immoral actions that “held Civil Rights leaders captive” and mentioned Rustin by name (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 92). At the same time, Powell

threatened King with a charge that King and Rustin were having a homosexual affair, warning that unless King denounced Rustin he would publish his ludicrous assertion. Rustin ceremoniously offered his resignation, and was devastated when instead of rejecting it, a panicked King accepted the offer terminating Rustin's involvement with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Again, Rustin's discourse became constrained by his sexuality and the ubiquitous homophobia that invaded the time period. Writing on this, D'Emilio asserts "Rustin had fought his way back from pariah status, had shaped and nurtured King's career, had been the invisible guiding hand behind many Civil Rights initiatives for years, and yet, again, he was discarded, this time for something that had never happened- indeed, for something that went unnamed" (92). In her work on queer history, Julie Prince discusses Rustin's narrative as an out man in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement who found himself rejected by King when his sexuality began to insinuate rumors within the ranks (62). Her perspective on Rustin within gay rights contexts asserts that the struggle for gay rights was overlooked or viewed as a "threat to larger movements" (Prince 62).

Rustin's sexuality finally came to a point of conflict during his period of organizing the March on Washington in 1963. Following a period of essential banishment from Civil Rights activism in which Rustin made public appearances but was discouraged from open involvement U.S. Civil Rights Leader Randolph sought out Rustin's knowledge and voice on the economic side of racial equality, specifically that of employment. Organizers met to discuss what was originally a march for jobs and economic freedom, but would later be known as the March on Washington an event that genuinely centered social justice above all else. Initially, Rustin was proposed as the organizer of the march but was immediately struck down after suggestions were made that he "had too many scars" (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 339). Instead, a compromise was

made, Randolph would officially lead the march as long as he could name his own assistant, he chose Rustin. What followed became a signature of U.S. Civil Rights history with the crowning achievement of the “I Have A Dream “ speech.

Yet, even the beacon of success that followed from the March could not keep homophobia from constraining his legacy. In his collection of lesbian and gay history Neil Miller chooses to focus on the suppression of Rustin’s sexuality from within the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, devoting a mere two pages to Rustin. Miller explains that the precursor for Rustin’s 1963 “morals trial” began with a conversation taped by FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover, which featured King expressing concern that “Rustin might get drunk before the march and ‘grab one little brother’ (331). Keeping consistent with previous analysis of the director, Hoover sprang into action to expose what he felt was a sexual deviant lurking in the midst of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, and disseminated the transcripts of the conversation to members of Congress⁶. Not long after Senator Strom Thurmond gave a lengthy account of Rustin’s “sexual perversion” in an attempt to discredit him (Miller 331). While Rustin’s sexuality loomed ever present in the background, or would be wielded as a weapon by his opponents, Rustin “was not someone who concealed his identity” (Miller 331). The contention of Rustin’s sexual identity served as a microcosm of what would later be the rhetorical strategies of the queer liberation movement. Specifically, unable to hide or obfuscate his sexual orientation, Rustin and his colleagues embraced it and emphasized their faith in his ability to complete crucial tasks. In a 1987 interview with *Open Hands* magazine A. Phillip Randolph was quoted as saying “well, if Bayard, a homosexual, is that talented – and I know the work he does for me- maybe I should be

⁶ For more information on J. Edgar Hoover see Charles, Morris. "Pink Herring & The Fourth Persona: J. Edgar Hoover's Sex Crime Panic." *Quarterly Journal Of Speech* 88.2 (2002): 228-245.

looking for somebody else homosexual who could be so useful” (qtd. in Weis and Carbado “Civil Rights Identity” 1177). As time progressed Rustin found himself at odds with the U.S. Civil Rights Movement’s mainstream heterosexist ways and began more economic and international pursuits.

Following the events of the March on Washington, in 1964, Rustin helped found and lead the A. Phillip Randolph Institute to focus on labor issues. As Rustin’s life moved beyond the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, he continued to speak out on civil and human rights both domestically and abroad throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, a legal and turn of events, as well as the onset of the AIDS epidemic, returned Rustin to the discourse of his own sexuality. In June of 1986, the Supreme Court heard the *Bowers vs. Hardwick case*; it was the first time a court would rule on a gay rights issue. In addition, the failure of U.S. Civil Rights leaders to respond to the growing AIDS/HIV epidemic encouraged Rustin to publicly comment and sensitize groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on “the social and racial implications of AIDS” (Carbado and Weise xxxix). The criminalization of homosexual behavior and the onset of the AIDS crisis encouraged an exigency Rustin could no longer ignore. As a result, Rustin began to publicly comment on his homosexuality in interviews with the *Village Voice* and other gay and lesbian publications. In addition, the 1980s gay rights movement lacked voice from homosexuals of stature who had come out, whereas Rustin’s sexual identity was a matter of public record (D’Emilio 488). As a perceived “elder statesman” of U.S. Civil Rights, Rustin was often required to discuss the various comparison of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement with the gay rights struggle” (Carbado and Weise xxxix). Rustin’s willingness to publicly discuss his sexuality came largely through the influence of his partner Walter Naegle. Naegle helped Rustin “heal some of the old wounds” and

would encourage Rustin to answer the many solicitations from gay liberation groups (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 488). Through these contextual efforts Rustin became more comfortable in vocalizing his personal identities.

While Rustin's sexuality constrained his political achievements it also contained and controlled his memory and his legacy. In discussing Rustin's legacy, D'Emilio offers "it is little wonder today that so few Americans today know who he is" (*Lost Prophet* 5). Rustin's homosexuality presents "invisibility in history" to the point that many of Rustin's key advancements toward African American equality are falsely attributed to King (Carbado and Weise 1136). Accordingly, Kurtz discusses aspects of false memory regarding the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, which attributes King as the primary spokesperson for nonviolence insisting that students "realize that it was Rustin who fervently and ceaselessly nudged, cajoled, and exhorted the Movement to embrace the wonderful synthesis of the examples of Gandhi and Jesus of Nazareth" (340). Kurtz suggests that perhaps Rustin's memory is best employed within the contexts of his contributions and convictions to nonviolence and "the courage by which he lived them" (341). However, Rustin's legacy must be as both queer and rhetorical.

Prior to their publication of the collected writings of Rustin, Carbado and Weise attempted to construct a "Civil Rights biography" in order to "expose a subtle instantiation of the politics of the closet" ("Civil Rights Identity" 1139). They argue that Rustin's sexuality constrained the expression of his Civil Rights authority and legacy. Weise and Carbado's analysis as critical legal scholars is particularly useful in that they attend to Rustin's "time on two crosses," explicating how the contexts of Rustin's racial and sexual intersectionality helped to form his beliefs and ideologies of the "human family" (1139). Carbado and Weise situate a potential inquiry into Rustin's legacy by claiming that Rustin's Civil Rights work "created a set

of social conditions (and developed a series of transferable political strategies) that made the gay rights movement possible” (1191-1192). While Weise and Carbado make an initial attempt to explore Rustin as a case for intersectionality, they fail at articulating how gay rights movements have employed remembrances of Rustin’s memory to appropriate ethos from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. As D’Emilio reminds us, “the most important stories from the past are often those that have been forgotten and that from obscure origins can emerge individuals with the power to change the world” (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 6). Through analysis of Rustin’s discourse and memories, this project enumerates those remembrances and elaborates upon Rustin’s intersectional identities and rhetorical strategies.

CHAPTER 4

RUSTIN'S INTERSECTIONAL DISCOURSE

The rhetoric of Bayard Rustin provides a rich opportunity to view the impact of sexual and racial identities on the discourse of a foundational social change advocate. As discussed in Chapter Two, a project of queer memory is constantly under the threat of erasure as heteronormativity erodes the work of LGBTQ individuals from our history books and from rhetorical sites of memory. As discussed in Chapter Three, Rustin's placement at the crossroads of race and sexualities contributes to a lack of public understanding not only of his contributions, but also of the methods through which he made the U.S. nation's most successful social movement plausible. Rustin cannot be seen as merely a representation of two constituencies; and it is the place of rhetorical studies scholars to revive Rustin's discursive legacy to enlighten future understandings of the ways in which race and sexuality mutually liberate and constrain each other. The following questions drive this chapter's analysis: how did Rustin's intersectional identities inform and constrain his discourse, and what tactics were available to him through his presence in both the gay and African American communities? In this chapter, I recover the rhetoric of Rustin through examining his most popular pieces of discourse from 1942 to 1987 by comparing his rhetorical tactics across temporal and situational spaces. I will proceed through the discourse employing rhetorician Carrie Crenshaw's work on intersectionality, which requires the critic to examine intersectional rhetoric on structural, political, and representational intersections (223). This analysis allows for the discovery and formulation of a grounded cluster of thematic rhetorical tactics that emerge. The chapter begins by applying rhetorical analyses to Rustin's

discourse during his early addresses of resistance, his middle years of political and structural organizing, and finally his activism beyond race in the 1980s. Taken together, this assemblage of discourse provides an opportunity to revive and revisit the rhetoric of Rustin through an intersectional frame.

Pre-Mainstream U.S. Civil Rights Discourse

An analysis of Rustin's initial period of activism and social protest is an apt way to begin to contextualize his intersectional rhetoric. As discussed in Chapter Two, political intersectionality represents "how political and discursive practices of race and gender interrelate to erase and marginalize" (C. Crenshaw 223). Rustin's initial discourse exhibits political intersectionality uniting the frameworks of both racial and nonviolent activism. From incarceration for conscientious objection during World War II to valiantly crossing the color line of bus segregation across the United States, Rustin began his career as a pacifist organizer and radical activist. Beginning in 1941 Rustin found himself amongst a vibrant group of protesters among the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), a pacifist organization headed by A.J. Muste. Yet, by 1942 the message of nonviolence began to lose its impact as the power of pacifism fell on deaf ears to a nation witnessing threats of attack upon its soil. In published reports, Rustin recalled a lack of opportunity to present the pacifist message in the typical contexts of school and church (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 50). Nonviolence as a general answer to warfare gained him little traction, but the strategic mind of Rustin recognized that the militarization of American culture brought to light the discriminatory racial conflicts and realized that "institutions are quite open to the presentation of non-violence as a solution to internal and domestic problems" (Rustin qtd in. D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 50).

In addition, Muste and Rustin both bore the torches lit by Indian revolutionary Mahatma Gandhi for nonviolent direct action which “required confrontation precisely at those pressure points found to be most oppressive” (Carbado and Weise xvii). As the FOR’s youth secretary, and a man of color, Rustin possessed a unique visibility related to the pressure points of violence that resulted from racial oppression. At the same time, he advocated that a message uniting the tenets of peace with race could be of use to a larger public. The established leaders of nonviolence, however, were troubled by the change in direction and felt that the commitment to African American progress was too specific of an appeal for the larger pacifist organization to take on; they feared the situation would result in conflicts to which the organization would be unable to respond (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 54). Muste granted Rustin permission to begin involvement in racial discrimination issues through his work with the FOR. Later, the governing council approved a radical approach to pacifist and racial issues with the founding of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 54). Thus, Rustin’s discourse at the time needed to reinforce the benefits of incorporating nonviolent direct action into a racial program.

In addition, his lived experience enhanced the exigency to unite peace and racial movements. Throughout most of 1942, Rustin visited more than twenty states, spoke to upwards of 5,000 people, and logged over 17,000 miles (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 45). During these trips into the southern United States, in particular, Rustin experienced acts of discrimination firsthand while experimenting with the power of nonviolence. Long before the Montgomery bus boycott and the actions of Rosa Parks in 1955, Rustin engaged in acts of nonviolent direct action which revealed and challenged the racial prejudice of many Jim Crow laws. The accounts of these trips are presented in two pieces of discourse: “Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow” and “The Negro and

Nonviolence.” These stories circulated quickly among the largely white pacifists in the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 47). Through these publications Rustin was able to establish himself as a firebrand of the pacifist movement, but he also found himself addressing an older establishment of FOR members at odds with his tactics and who felt he strayed too far from the Judeo-Christian platform employed by most pacifists at the time (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 50). While the pacifist organization wanted to end the war, Rustin sought a much broader and comprehensive campaign for the elimination of injustice. Thus, Rustin’s discourse required him to employ intersectionality to unite the movements of nonviolence and racial progress. The audience for both pieces of discourse was likely the group of pacifists not yet convinced of the importance and power of nonviolence as an approach to racial issues. Thus, the audience is possibly a combination of constitutive (i.e., internal) and oppositional or undecided regarding the implementation of nonviolence as a rhetorical tactic to social change.

Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow. In his essay “Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow” Rustin’s intersectional identity as both African American and pacifist allowed his rhetoric to unite the causes of peace with racial justice. Though the inclusion of direct action on behalf of racial progress was tentative, Rustin would find a way to unite the two ideas employing his intersectional identities to put his theory into practice. Published in *Fellowship: The Journal of the Fellowship of Reconciliation*, during June of 1942, “Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow” provides an account of Rustin’s defiance of Jim Crow laws during a bus trip from Kentucky to Tennessee. Rustin rhetorically constructed the need for nonviolent action as the right path for racial progress. Rustin believed that the application of nonviolent tactics to the elements of racial issues could serve as a solid position from which to recruit allies for the pacifist movement. Through

his conscription of allies, Rustin adhered to intersectionality's ability to recognize "that these categories are both imbued with oppressive power relations and that they have the potential to serve as politically empowering alliances to resist subordination" (C. Crenshaw 223). Rustin accomplished this through unifying the tactics of nonviolence for racial progress, and employing lived experience as an outsider to create agitation.

Rustin's intersectional identity allowed for unification of nonviolence and racial progress through transcendence. According to critical legal scholar Mari Matsuda, intersectional identity provides "strategies for resolving dissonance through the process of appropriation and transformation" (Matsuda 333). Similarly, Rustin transformed acts of racial prejudice to common topoi (such as injustice) for pacifist organizers. From the start, Rustin's refusal to move to the back of the bus is met with terse consternation, he is told "Niggers ride in the back" (Rustin 2). In response, Rustin transformed an act of racial discrimination into broader terms of justice stating, "My friend, I believe that is an unjust law. If I were to sit in the back I would be condoning injustice" (Rustin 2). This act of transformation was further put into practice with the arrival of a stand of policeman who shouted racial slurs and told him to "Get up, you nigger!" As Rustin refused to comply with law enforcement, the narrative escalated to the threat of violence. Despite the insistence that he move to the back of the bus, Rustin declared, "It is my sincere conviction that the power of love in the world is greatest power existing. If you have a greater power, my friend, you may move" (Rustin 2). In this quotation Rustin was able to adequately unite his subject position as an African American man and create unification with the familiar trope of love which appeals to the pacifist community. His intersectional identity afforded him the ability to speak from, and through, his lived experience as an oppressed man of color by transforming that experience in terms that appealed to the pacifist community.

Further, his racial identity was not compromised by speaking through multiplicative forms. That is, he was not required to leave his race at the door when speaking to pacifism, and thus, he created a space for pacifism to speak to race. This tactic was evidenced by his inclusion of pacifist appeals to Christian faith while arguing for racial justice. As he described upon his arrival at jail, he recalled that “being bunged about, rumped, discarded, yet undeterred” (Rustin 4). The police, frustrated that their belligerent bullying was of no avail, as they purportedly remarked, “Nigger, you’re supposed to be scared when you come in here” (Rustin 4). Sharply Rustin responded with an intersectional blend of lived experience and pacifist beliefs stating “I am fortified by truth, justice, and Christ....there is no need for me to fear” (Rustin 4). Rustin’s transformation of racial resistance to pacifist terminology represented the fruitfulness of his intersectional identity as both pacifist and African American as a method of rhetorical invention.

Rustin’s intersectional identity also allowed an opportunity to employ his outsider status to create agitation that communicated messages to the dominant public. As a man of color in the 1940’s Rustin was a perpetual outsider in a system run by Jim Crow transportation laws. However, this outsider status gave him the insight to use pacifist methods of nonviolent direct action as a mode of social change. Rustin, a student of Gandhi, saw heuristic value in placing himself at the crossroads of conflicting and contrasting identities. For example, he described the actions he took on the bus when, instead of moving to the legally required space on the back of the bus, he “sat down in the second seat” (Rustin 2). When he was told to move to the back seat, Rustin asked a single powerful question: “why”? The response from the driver was both institutional and prejudiced in stating “it’s the law” and “niggers ride in the back” (Rustin 2). At various stops Rustin was asked to get up and move to the back; and in each interaction Rustin answered all commands with the irreverent: “why”? It was only after he had clearly agitated the

bus drivers and police on the route that Rustin employed his act of defiance as a way to have a conversation about the morality of the law. Rustin arrived at the crux of his act of agitation by stating, “I believe I have a right to sit here’ I said quietly, ‘If I sit in the back of the bus I am depriving that child- I pointed to a little white child of five or six – of the knowledge that there is injustice here, which I believe it is his right know” (Rustin 2). Here, Rustin spoke through his outsider status to have his body literally serve as a site of agitation for the race and peace movements. As the dominant public beat and attempted to “incite him to violence” Rustin’s rhetorical construction of intersectionality as a source of protest served to prove the ability of pacifism to impact the cause of racial justice (Rustin 4).

As a pacifist, and conscientious objector Rustin was bound by conviction to oppose all actions that threatened the progress of peace. As a man of color he was constrained by a myriad of laws and social conditions that determined to remand his subject position to the shadows. While this outsider status might seem to constrain his effectiveness as a pacifist rhetor, Rustin’s act of nonviolent resistance benefitted both parties as he spoke to the respect with which white passengers treated him after proving his commitment to nonviolence. In this way, Rustin was able to advance the cause of peace and racial justice by rhetorically situating himself at the constellation of both movements

Analysis of “Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow” reveals that Rustin’s intersectional identities functioned through his rhetoric to employ his outsider status, multiplicative forms, and the tactic of nonviolence in achieving social action. As such, Rustin’s intersectional identities offered a unique discursive pathway to unite the two distinct movements for a united cause. Understanding Rustin’s employment of intersectionality became crucial in the unification of both the pacifist and Civil Rights movements.

The Negro and Nonviolence. During October of 1942 Rustin published a second essay designed to turn pacifist attention toward racial progress in *Fellowship: The Journal of the Fellowship of Reconciliation*. The context of this piece is similar to “Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow,” however this particular discourse was impacted by the attack on Pearl Harbor and the escalating contours of tensions leading the United States into the second world war. Despite the increasing military concerns, Rustin remained ever-committed to the use of racial struggles to spread the message of non-violence. Rustin’s essay “The Negro and Nonviolence” built a case for the intersection of race and nonviolence through applying racial experiences to the nonviolent movement, agitating the nonviolent movement to action, and identifying with the cause of racial justice.

Initially, Rustin’s discourse employed intersectionality through the application of racial experiences in the context of nonviolence. To do this he had to apply the rhetorical tactics of one group to the cause of another. For instance, Rustin characterized the need for racial progress through the imagery of war, thus appropriating a trope from the pacifist community to that of race. Rustin cast the scene in a “time of war” and stated “the general social condition is fertile soil for the development of hate and fear, and transference of those to minority groups is quite simple” (Rustin 6). The militant imagery of the state of race relations was also present in the litany of anecdotes Rustin presented in which racial tensions all met with violent ends. The essay described how returning soldiers were killed for failing to tip their hats to local police; men are “shot in the leg, stripped of [their] clothes, and beaten to death” in front of their wives and children “for refusing to remove [their] hand from [their] pocket[s]” (Rustin 7). Located within the structure of these anecdotes are words such as “forced,” “threatened,” and “severe punishment,” which reinforced for Rustin the escalating sense of danger that lurked in the

distance. Rustin described African American students hiding machine guns for future use soldiers wanting to spill the blood of white adversaries (Rustin 8). He feared that “many Negroes see mass violence coming” (Rustin 8). Through this description Rustin repositioned familiar tropes of war and fear that were familiar to the pacifist community to his experiences as a man of color creating a connection between the two movements.

Rustin was able to use his intersectional identity to incorporate the lived experience of people of color to the context of nonviolence as he ascribed the source of racial violence stemming from “frustration,” “despair,” and “fear.” Uniquely, Rustin brought this dilemma into the space of the war and military concerns, stating:

An increasingly militant group has it in mind to demand *now*, with violence if necessary, the rights it has long been denied. “If we must die abroad for democracy we can’t have,” I have heard a friend of mine say, “then we might as well die right here fighting for our own rights.” (Rustin 8)

By bringing the context of death abroad as agency to highlight the racial inequalities, as well as establishing motivation for racial violence, Rustin was able to place racial progress in line with the platform of a pacifist organization.

Further, Rustin used his identity as a pacifist to enhance the tactics of racial discourse. He asserted that danger remained hidden from the modes of racial activists, stating: “To demand rights but not to see the potential danger in such a course, or the responsibility to develop a means of meeting that danger, seems tragic” (Rustin 8). Rustin laid the foundation of fear and danger to encourage action on racial issues. Rustin directly named the source of the danger two thirds through the discourse by stating, “we must remember that too often conflict is already at hand and that there is hence a greater danger: the inevitable use of force by persons embittered by injustice and unprepared for nonviolence” (Rustin 9). Rustin suggested that racial injustice teemed with the threat of violence, and that only the intervention of nonviolent teaching could

mollify the racial mob. Given the threatening uses of force the pacifist community witnessed at the time, Rustin masterfully wove a similar thread and tone to frame the future as that which teetered on the edge of destruction. For an audience of pacifists who witnessed the first attack on American soil, Pearl Harbor⁷, this construction likely held significance. Yet, what was unique was that the danger hanging over the heads of the American public was not an external axis of power, but instead internal racial strife. As such, Rustin's intersectional identity allowed him access to rhetorical strategies that created impacts for both parties.

Rustin also wielded his intersectionality to agitate the nonviolent community to act for racial equality through establishing responsibility and shame. Matsuda argues that the depiction of lived experience by people of color offers a dual voice for liberation (334). Rustin characterized the choice to act on behalf of "The Negro," using nonviolence, as a "duty" and a "practical necessity" (Rustin 9). In the first call to action of the address he proclaimed, "In all places where we have a voice, it is our high responsibility to indicate that the Negro can attain progress only if he uses, in his struggle, nonviolent direct action- a technique consistent with the ends he desires" (Rustin 9). The "high responsibility" at use here worked as a form of guilt to incite the pacifist organization to move. Nonviolent action was placed within the context of terms such as "sacrifice" and "suffering" to call to mind the Christian precepts at work in the fellowship's key members. Responsibility was then juxtaposed with shame for inaction exemplified through the statement, "it is a cause for shame that millions of people continue to live under conditions of injustice, while we make no effective effort to remedy the situation" (Rustin 9). Rustin placed responsibility for the "conditions of injustice" squarely on those who

⁷ Here I am referring to the attack on Pearl Harbor by Imperial Japan, which caused U.S. Congress to pass Roosevelt's request to enter World War II.

disagreed that nonviolent involvement with racial needs; if one disagreed one was responsible for the previously described murders and job loss.

Finally, and perhaps most uniquely, Rustin's intersectionality fomented identification with the Negro uniting his audience under the banner of nonviolent racial justice. Rustin opened an opportunity for pacifist organizations to succeed in reaching out to the African American community through identification. For example, he commented, "In many parts of America the Negro, in his despair, is willing to follow any leadership seemingly sincerely identified with his struggle if he is convinced that such leadership offers a workable method" (Rustin, 9). Rustin suggested that through identification with the "Negro struggle" the FOR had the best chance at success in preventing violence. Rustin also proposed how "isolated the average Negro feels in his struggles. The average Negro has largely lost faith in middle-class whites" (Rustin, 9). In this way, Rustin was able to establish that the African American cause required coalitions to succeed. By situating isolationism as negative, Rustin implied the need for coalitions outside of racial lines. Further, Rustin deputized the teachings of Gandhi to add ethos to the nonviolent movement – connecting again to a more universal struggle for "developing a new dynamic force" (Rustin 9). This image served as a tonic against the bitter poison of isolationism. Rustin was able to place the goals of African American struggle into "an example that may be the first step in freeing the world" (Rustin 9). In doing so, he was able to ameliorate racial discourse to appeal to broader coalitions through identification with universal principles of freedom and religion. His intersectionality allowed him to place non-normative elements, such as race, in normative frameworks. Meaning through juxtaposing nonviolence and race, his discourse provided his multiracial audience with access to identify with race. Rustin neatly tied together the threads of his dialectic argument for identification by stating "Identification with the Negro

community demands considerable sacrifice....the *identified* person is the one who fights side by side with him for justice” (Rustin 10). In this sense, he was able to bridge the pacifists and racial equality movements together through shared action.

Indeed, “The Negro and Nonviolence” exhibited Rustin’s ability to apply his racial experiences to nonviolence and enhance his racial experience through his intersectional identities. Through themes of shame and responsibility he agitated the pacifist community to take action in regards to the rampant racial injustices perpetrated at the time. His discourse built identification with the African American community by encouraging coalitions and uniting for a cause.

The analysis of both “Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow” and “The Negro and Nonviolence” exhibits the value of Rustin’s intersectional identities, as both pacifist and African American, in uniting nonviolence and racial equality. He was able to speak through dual audiences reaching across racial divides. The impact of his rhetoric was evidenced by the FOR’s agreement to form the Congress on Racial Equality with the mission to challenge local restrictions using nonviolent direct action methods.

Mainstream U.S. Civil Rights Discourse

Following analysis of political intersectionality within Rustin’s early activism, it is important to contextualize the structural intersectionality of his most prominent period of mainstream Civil Rights discourse. As discussed in Chapter Two, rhetoricians must look to structural intersectionality for “the material consequences of being situated with overlapping hierarchies of oppression” (C. Crenshaw 223). Rustin’s discourse in the era of mainstream U.S. Civil Rights represents structural intersectionality as he was positioned on the boundaries of radicalism and liberalist ideals, as well as his lived experience as a gay African American.

Initially, Rustin's period of nonviolent direct protest culminated during 1963 with the convergence of his professional and personal achievements. In April of 1962, Rustin aided Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) through Project C (for "Confrontation") in Birmingham (Levine 132). Rustin biographer John D'Emilio attributes the focus of attention on Birmingham as a means for King to regain national attention which had waned in previous months (*Lost Prophet* 332). D'Emilio writes that the SCLC was losing steam and person-power, while at the same time the March on Washington movement was losing its credibility from the viewpoints of the NAACP (*Lost Prophet* 331).

Further, the period of 1963 was a time of exhaustive struggle in the South for the mainstream U.S. Civil Rights Movement, in particular. Everywhere they could, African Americans attempted to disrupt the segregationist scheme through attending white schools, using public pools, and filing numerous lawsuits with the hope of gaining national attention (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 331). The result of these efforts were mixed – some sustained headlines for months, while others failed to find palpable ink outside of a local paper (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 332). On a national level, the Kennedy Administration held fast to its desire to avoid federal involvement in U.S. Civil Rights. The White House "counseled patience" to the activists of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, claiming it had little legislative authority to intervene (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 333). This belief would change during April of 1963 when a group of youth marched toward Birmingham's city center. In response, police chief Eugene "Bull" Connor famously unleashed an arsenal of dogs and fire hoses on the youth protestors, images of which were swiftly broadcast across the world through television reels, pictures, and newspaper reports. Police detained over 2,500 demonstrators, and more than 500 students in the course of a week, including King himself (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 333). The result of the crusade was a watershed

moment in Civil Rights awareness as a great number of cities in the South witnessed full scale racial resistance. Rustin recognized the importance of Birmingham; he viewed the city's many difficult racial dynamics as an opportune moment in which to nationalize Civil Rights through nonviolent protest. In June of 1963, *Liberation* magazine published Rustin's essay "The Meaning of Birmingham" as well as an open letter from King entitled, "A Letter from a Birmingham Jail." While King's discourse would become one of the most famous and pivotal documents of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement era, Rustin's discourse would fall to relative obscurity. Still, Rustin's own take on the Birmingham milieu – the crucible of the movement – as well as his powerful essay on protest and politics is worthy of investigation to understand his use of structural intersectionality.

The Meaning of Birmingham. A brief analysis of Rustin's essay "The Meaning of Birmingham" provides insight into Rustin's structural intersectional rhetoric through collective identity. Social movement scholars Vetra Taylor and Nancy Whittier contend that "collective identity is the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests and solidarity" (170). In this essay, Rustin constructed his shared racial and classed identity through examining the intersection of issues. Rustin saw Birmingham as an opportune crisis that could rally together the disparate factions of African American organizations. In "The Meaning of Birmingham" Rustin designated the incidents of Birmingham as a larger "moment of truth." He said, the "struggle from now on will be fought in a different context" (Rustin 208). The new context to which he referred was a national unity for the liberation of African Americans from all forms of oppression.

To achieve his goals, Rustin constituted a national identity through class experiences. Of this, he wrote, "For the first time, every black man, woman, and child, regardless of station, has

been brought into the struggle” (Rustin 208). Rustin spanned his vision of national unity by listing the various cities, demographics, and progressive organizations that had joined the “direct action struggle.” The removal of barriers to collective identity was especially poignant across class structures as Rustin observed the dichotomous relationship between upper and lower class African Americans:

E. Franklin Frazier wrote in the past of the Negro bourgeoisie. He told of the efforts of the Negro upper classes to ape white people, of the exploitation of Negroes by wealthy members of their own race and the absence of identity among Negroes. But had Frazier been alive today to see Birmingham he would have discovered that the black community had welded into a classless revolt....They know that unless they join in the struggle they will lose the business of their fellow Negroes, who are in no mood to tolerate Uncle Tom-ism. (Rustin 210)

Here, Rustin employed the image of class differences “welded” together to create a sense of unity through the sparking flames of the Birmingham campaign. The inclusion of upper-class African American citizens was particularly important to Rustin’s organizational efforts which required considerable funds. He reminded his audiences that the struggle for racial equality was more than a battle to challenge racial prejudice. Rather, the struggle was a racial battle that intersected with class. Related to this point, he wrote, “the great battle lays ahead. And this battle the African American population is now prepared to wage. This is going to be the battle for jobs” (Rustin 212). Rustin’s war took place on the battlefield of economic effectiveness as he declared it the “cause for economic freedom”, and his weapons were nothing short of the African American body itself (Rustin 212). He narrated how “Negroes conclude they must upset the social equilibrium more drastically than the opposition can. They place their bodies against an unjust law by sitting in a restaurant, a library, a park or swimming in a pool” (Rustin 211). These instances exemplified the collective identity forged through experiences of class, as well

as exuded his intersectionality as both a radical activist and a skilled leader who worked through mass organizations.

Rustin's construction of collective identity was also present in his discussion of boundaries. Critical rhetorician Anthony Slagle argues that boundaries are essential to the construction of collective identities because while they highlight differences upon which oppression is founded, they also potentially emphasize the ways in which group members are similar to one another (Slagle 89). Rustin explored the material consequences of overlapping oppressions through recalling sites at the boundaries in which African Americans created paths of resistance. Rustin connected the battles fought in Birmingham to other uprisings by African Americans throughout history, including slave revolts, and other acts of "historical impatience" (207). Rustin examined these elements of resistance using language that emphasized boundaries:

The great lesson of Birmingham is at once dangerous and creative; black people have moved to that level where they cannot be contained. They are not prepared to wait for courts, elections, votes, government officials, or even Negro leaders.The black people *themselves* are united and determined to destroy all unjust laws and discriminatory practices, and they want total freedom, including economic opportunity and the right to marry whom they damned well please. (Rustin 213).

Here, Rustin constructed the various forms of overlapping racial and classed oppressions at the boundaries of so-called acceptable society. His insistence that despite the containing and constraining forces at work within African American identity that collective identification served as a path of resistance. Rustin's emphasis on boundaries served to unite a collective identity using sites of contrast and combat. His construction of collective identity avoided rhetorical frameworks of unity but examined the ways in which the collective were placed within overlapping and intersecting systems of oppression. He affirmed that "gradual and token progress" only reinforced the revolutionary stance and could no longer be tolerated (Rustin 214).

Rustin's establishment of collective identity through conflict, as opposed to sympathy, demanded a dominant response.

Beyond collective identity, Rustin's "Meaning of Birmingham" reflected structural intersectionality through his enlistment of consciousness. Consciousness is defined by social movement scholars as "the process by which groups come to understand themselves as a collective in opposition to an oppressive group" (Taylor and Whittier 114). Rustin set this opposition in motion through the use of militant rhetoric and imagery in the course of describing the implications of the actions at Birmingham. He described the actions of social protest against racial prejudice as "an open and publicly declared war on segregation and racial discrimination throughout the nation" (Rustin 207). The war imagery is reinforced through mention of a "relentless war on Jim Crow" (Rustin 206). Communication between leaders of institutions and members of the African American community were transformed into "negotiations" and "demands." The goal of the nonviolent protest movement was also conceptualized using typical war terminology. Of this, Rustin wrote, "the war cry is unconditional surrender-end *all* Jim Crow now. Not next week, not tomorrow, but *now*", and the powerful elite must be "made to submit" (Rustin 208). Rustin's use of consciousness created a common ground for multiple identities to connect with his discourse.

Rustin's consciousness traversed racial boundaries through a call for an alliance of radical forces for social change. Throughout the texts he described the need for nonviolent activism through the actions of "major power groups in our society" to participate "as meaningful allies" (Rustin 210). Matsuda argues that this consciousness leads to transformational tactics in which mainstream texts are adopted to create frameworks for radical social change (Matsuda 346). For Rustin, the form of radical social change came from a consciousness of

structural intersectionality in which he demonstrated that “the use of the black body against injustice is necessary as a means of creating social disruption and dislocation precisely because the accepted democratic channels have been denied the Negro” (Rustin 210). Rustin employed consciousness to arrive at an intersectional space in which the denial of democratic participation served as an overlapping oppression to the social barriers for racial equality. Rustin suggested that it was at these sources of material consequence that the “use of the black body” gained traction as a mechanism for rhetorical advancement.

The impact of the discourse, in concert with King’s letter, was powerful and prompt. In the weeks following the publication of both pieces, the Kennedy Administration began asking U.S. Civil Rights leaders what they could do about a racial problem that clearly was not going to go away on its own. In early June, Kennedy made U.S. Civil Rights the focus of his address to introduce what would become the Early Accommodations Act using rhetoric that echoed Rustin stating “time for tokenism is finished” (Levine 133). In the middle of June, leaders of the SCLC and FOR convened to discuss a national U.S. Civil Rights march on Washington that would fuse the various economic and social causes of African Americans. The march became Rustin’s crowning achievement, and it would also profoundly altered his discourse moving forward.

Personal/Political Shifts. While Rustin’s pre-March on Washington discourse ardently navigated the intersectional line of race and class, his actions as the lead organizer for the March on Washington, in 1963, came with consequences that would heighten his discourse’s structural intersectionality. Thus, it is important to attend to the contextual framework that would signal a tremendous shift in Rustin’s discourse. First, the March on Washington was a tremendous success for Civil Rights activists nation wide, but it also had a particularly transformative effect on Rustin. Through the organization and planning of the herculean task, Rustin faced

confrontations to his identity on both personal and professional levels. Personally, Rustin battled reproach from Congressional leaders and other members of the established government that sought to undermine his credibility as an organizer using the only weapon at their disposal: his sexuality. As addressed in Chapter Three Senator Strom Thurmond derided Rustin's Pasadena arrest and called him a communist, a draft dodger, and a "pervert" (Levine 142). As it became circulated in the national press, Thurmond's comments sent uproar among moderate quarters of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement who called for Rustin's resignation (Anderson 251). In an age defined by a 'play it but don't say it' approach to homosexuality; Rustin became the most visible homosexual in the country. Yet, what is significant to this analysis is that Rustin's fellow leaders of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement had invested too much energy into the march to effectively denounce him. Instead, they were forced to stand by his side. Various leaders of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement marshaled statements of support that did not directly address Rustin's sexuality, but instead retained focus on his success as an effective organizer. Suddenly, the activist, who had always spoken with his own voice had to depend on the voices of others.

Professionally, the planning of the march would also introduce the once radical Rustin to the cause of compromise. In the days preceding the march, Rustin met with a series of controversies regarding the speeches at the Lincoln Memorial on the National Mall (Levine 242). The Kennedy Administration was concerned with the tone of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) chairman John Lewis' speech; still others raised concern that not a single woman's voice would be heard at the podium. Ironically, the conflict over Lewis' speech dealt with its revolutionary tone, a tone echoed by Rustin himself a few months prior, calling for all African Americans to "burn Jim Crow to the ground nonviolently" and to "take matters into our own hands and create a source of power, outside any national structure" (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet*

353). Rustin was called on to convince Lewis to tone down his inflammatory rhetoric, which threatened to derail the peacefulness of the entire program. He was successful in this endeavor to temper Lewis, and here, we gain a glimpse into the transformation of Rustin from agitator to accommodator.

Despite the acclaim and success of the March on Washington, the events occurring in 1964 would also provide exigency for Rustin's discursive shift to political organizer from radical activist. Levine proposed that the period following the March on Washington left Rustin "prominent but without a home among Civil Rights leaders" (Levine 154). His attempts to forge an alliance with the liberal wing of the labor movement and to broaden the agenda and financing of CORE caused the organization to fear he was too ambitious to take leadership (Levine 154). In addition, his homosexuality prevented King from being able to install him as the executive secretary of SCLC. Thus, Rustin's sexuality and his dual identities initiated his first slip in a fall from public memory.

U.S. Civil Rights organizer A. Phillip Randolph offered him an opportunity to lead his own organization, the A. Phillip Randolph Institute, whose stated focus was to build coalitions for economic support. In addition, elements outside of Rustin's purview would also modulate his racial discourse. Two weeks after Johnson signed the Equal Accommodations Act in June 1964, a white policeman in Harlem shot an African American man and "Harlem exploded" (Levine 163). The summer of 1964 was a period of intense violence and looting and Rustin's temperate tone of nonviolence was booed at various meetings when a year prior he was met with cheers (Levine 163). Levine writes that in the year following the March on Washington Rustin became "irrelevant to new forms of radicalism in the protest movement, both within and outside established Civil rights organizations" (Levine 156).

Politically, the presidential elections played an additional hand in Rustin's discourse with the U.S. Civil Rights platform of Lyndon Johnson and the defection of many Southern Democrats to the Republican Party (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 394). Right wing extremists hostile to U.S. Civil Rights and social change gained majority of the GOP which resulted in the advancement of extreme conservative Barry Goldwater. Goldwater "opposed government involvement in social and economic welfare...and wanted most aspects of government to rest with the states" an argument that carried strong connections to the segregationist arguments of southern democrats (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 378). The potential election of Goldwater was of great concern to Rustin and a meeting of U.S. Civil Rights leaders was held to discuss the implications of a Goldwater victory. Levine writes that as a result Randolph asked Rustin to prepare a statement asking all U.S. Civil Rights leaders to pledge a moratorium on demonstrations until after the election stating "once again he was seen as standing with the liberal establishment rather than the radical activists" (156). Rustin's political position began to change with his appraisal of the Johnson Administration, specifically Hubert Humphrey as Vice President, caused Rustin to realize "that more could be done within the political system than by railing against it" (Levine 156). A landslide victory for the Johnson Administration, in addition to a Democratic control of Congress, allowed for a public mandate on U.S. Civil Rights issues that enticed Rustin to turn towards the political.

From Protest To Politics. The culmination of the political and personal shifts in Rustin's discourse in 1964 is best exemplified through analysis of his most well-known piece of discourse, "From Protest to Politics." Published in *Commentary* magazine in 1964, the discourse offered themes of convergence, overlapping oppressions of race and class, and the necessity for

coalitions across identity groups. These themes came to represent a picturesque example of Rustin's structural intersectionality following the March on Washington.

Initially, Rustin's discourse represented structural intersectionality through a convergence of political conceptualizations. At the start, Rustin employed the images of the Freedom Rides, sit-ins, and Birmingham campaigns as affecting "institutions which are relatively peripheral both to the American socioeconomic order and to the fundamental conditions of life of the Negro people" (Rustin 116). By designating these campaigns as periphery he resorted to a form of invention in which his discourse was founded upon the intersections of race and class. Race and class collide through Rustin's emphasis of institutions, that "it is institutions –social, political, and economic which are the ultimate molders of collective sentiments" (123). He distanced himself from nonviolent direct action techniques and instead suggested a transformation to a broader context:

A conscious bid for *political power* is being made, and in the course of that effort a tactical shift is being affected. Direct-action techniques are being subordinated to a strategy calling for the building of community institutions or power bases....What began as a protest movement is being challenged to translate itself into a political movement. (Rustin 117-118)

The placement of demonstration as an initial stage to a larger political context suggested that these actions could not be finalized. Rustin's rhetoric broadened the scope of U.S. Civil Rights discourse from the demand for equality to a call to traditional bases of power.

Further, Rustin's convergence of social structures required that traditional modes of protest be translated into terms accessible to a dominant public – politics. Rustin further emphasized the ineffectiveness of individual social protest by stating that the various forms of oppression faced by the African American population "are not soluble by private, voluntary efforts but require government action – or politics" (Rustin 117). He was able to transcend

actions of protest into a larger systemic critique through antithesis, describing the riots in Harlem as “not race riots; they were outbursts of class aggression in a society where class and color are converging disastrously” (Rustin 118). While emphasizing a shift to structures and political systems, Rustin made clear that the new form of action taken by activists was one of political power through voting. He directly named the “Negro [*sic*] vote” as the cause of landslide victory for the Democratic Party in Tennessee, Virginia, Florida, Tennessee and Arkansas (Rustin 118). Thus, Rustin’s previous tone of collective identity illustrated through social protest was now sublimated to promote collective identity which was enforced through collective political and monetary power.

In addition to the convergence of structures, “From Protest to Politics” advanced intersectionality through reliance on the overlapping oppressions of race and class. Rustin achieved this through proving the tactics of U.S. Civil Rights protest as ineffective when looking through economic frames. He provocatively asked, “What is the value of winning access to public accommodations for those who lack money to use them?” (Rustin 117). His rhetorical tactic insisted that the actions of U.S. Civil Rights demonstrators must take on a program that encompassed economic relations. Rustin was able to reconstitute his previous arguments of the morality of justice through juxtaposition of economic failure with demoralization:

The number of northern schools with an excessive proportion of minority youth proliferates. And behind this is the continuing growth of racial slums, spreading over our central cities and trapping Negro youth in a milieu which, whatever its legal definition sows an unimaginable demoralization. (Rustin 118)

The use of economic terms such as proportion, proliferation, and growth was offset by terminology of decay and devastation. Rustin to draw close correlation between the current economic woes at work for the African American population and its potential to draw personal woe.

Moreover, African American youth were constituted as trapped and constricted by economic conditions outside of their control; they were unable to break free using traditional modes of social change. When drawn together these images reinforced Rustin's arguments for a need for economic alterations as a catalyst for social progress. Rustin also worked from the ideological image of the ladder as a metaphor for capitalist class structures by observing "the lower rungs of the ladder are being lopped off. This means individuals will no longer be able to start at the bottom and work their way up; he [sic] will have to start in the middle and hold on tight" (Rustin 119). In this way Rustin ruptured traditional images of the self-sufficient "bootstrap" mentality while reinforcing economic upheaval. Rustin's use of "hold on tight" carried an implication that the economic ladder is likely to fall, taking his audience with it. Rustin reiterated that race and class were multiplicative rather than additive forms of identity and that by tracing each concept to their intersections there was a greater chance for social change.

Finally, Rustin's discourse made a detailed case for a coalition of interests that bridged the African American community with like-minded groups. Rustin positioned the issues of a singular identity in terms that were accessible to a broad range of social issues. For example, Rustin described the economic impacts of de facto racism as "the result of society's total failure to meet not only the Negroes needs but human needs generally" (Rustin 121). In this way Rustin was able to take the unique needs of racial discourse and place it in the context of a broader systemic critique. He demanded that coalitions be developed across mutual political interests. Rustin's demands were supported by claiming that the dominant public benefits from recognizing civil rights to African Americans elaborating, "it was not until Negroes assaulted *de facto* school segregation in the urban centers that the issue of quality education for *all* children stirred into motion" (Rustin 123). Beyond schools, Rustin also used the fight for U.S. Civil

Rights as a means to “initiate a war on poverty.” Rustin utilized the success of the March on Washington to unify his arguments for coalitions:

The future of the Negro struggle depends on whether the contradictions of this society can be solved by a coalition of progressive forces which becomes the effective political majority in the United States. I speak of the coalition which staged the March on Washington, passed the Civil Rights Act, and laid the basis for the Johnson landslide—Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and religious groups. (Rustin 125)

Rustin suggested the strongest path to power for a minority group was to join forces to advance mutual political objectives, becoming a collective majority. Framing the success of previous actions to a space beyond racial boundaries was a significant shift away from the discourse of the time.

Rustin’s handling of coalition was unique for the time as he was able to rhetorically build connections across social systems and identity categories without losing the integrity of the African American narrative. Social movement scholars have argued that “the struggle for social justice itself is effectively undercut as oppressive systems tend to be linked within relations of domination and subordination” (Moon and Flores 109). In addition, scholarship suggests singling out one aspect produces skewed visions of relations of power (Moon and Flores, 109). Rustin echoed this concept by offering the belief that coalitions “force the Negro to surrender his political independence to white liberals, that he would be neutralized, deprived of his cutting edge, absorbed into the establishment” (Rustin 125). Yet, Rustin was able to address these concerns by advocating that the integrity of African American power as a “swing vote depends solely on others it derives power from them” implying that power for any minority was only as strong as its ability to reinforce social structures (Rustin 125). Rustin denigrated rhetorical tactics which emphasized racial equality as a discourse meant for African Americans alone, or what he deemed a “no win policy.” He criticized the tactics of fellow African American activist Malcolm

X and others who “conclude that the only viable strategy is shock; above all, the hypocrisy of white liberals must be exposed” (Rustin 122). For Rustin the employment of fear as a rhetorical tactic required one to believe “that at the core of the white man’s heart lies a buried affection for Negroes a proposition one may be permitted to doubt” (Rustin 122).

Rustin offered an alternative that realized this fallacy and reached to the core of coalitional politics. He argued, “We can agitate the right questions by probing at the contradictions which still stand in the way of the Great Society...there is a limit to what Negroes can do alone” (Rustin 129). From someone whose presence among both pacifist and African American circles served as a constant agitation, this viewpoint echoes the form and function of structural intersectionality to “ask the other question” and examine the ways in which conflicts at the edges of social structures constrain discourse.

The impact of Rustin’s discourse on his ethos within the U.S. Civil Rights Movement was polarizing to moderates and radicals within the cause. “From Protest to Politics” garnered mixed reception, “being warmly applauded by the liberal and trade union communities than by the black protest movement” (Anderson 285). Members of the Black Power Movement, such as Stokely Carmichael and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, denounced Rustin as a traitor to the cause for abandoning his militant position. The shift from racial to economic issues also alienated him from previous allies, such as CORE leader James Farmer, who contended, “Rustin has no credibility in the black community. His commitment is to labor, not to the black man. His belief that the black man’s problem is economic, not racist, runs counter to the black community thinking” (qtd in Pace). Other members of the largely white democratic socialist movement such as Tom Kahn and Michael Harrington considered Rustin’s act an intelligent, forward thinking move while suggesting that coalition politics might not necessarily accomplish

much in the way of public support because it lacked “a visceral response in people” (Anderson 286). Other writers expressed that the choice of support for the Democratic Party was a complete surprise from one who stood at the cutting edge of progressive change. Even D’Emilio notes “radicals with this kind of history did not make the democratic party the staging ground for their work” (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 402). Yet, after the public trials and publications about his political work and personal “problem” Rustin could no longer serve as the outspoken activist. He was a shepherd without a lively flock of followers. Without a formal role in any major organization for racial equality, Rustin exercised the only power afforded him by this sexual and racial identity: that of coalitional power.

Turn Toward Gay Rights Activism

The final phase of analysis locates Rustin’s representational intersectionality in the latter part of his life in which he addressed his sexuality through discourse. Contextually, legal events in the 1980s would encourage Rustin to speak openly for gay rights after years of refusing to speak publicly about his homosexuality (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 490). In June of 1986, the Supreme Court ruled on *Bowers vs. Hardwick*; it was the first time a court would “hold” a decision on a gay rights issue. In a polarized five-to-four decision, the high court ruled that laws prohibiting the private, consensual sex of homosexuals were indeed constitutional. In the majority opinion, Justice Byron White declined to “cognize gays as a social group, to him they are more similar to adulterers than to blacks” (Jacobs 21). The criminalization of homosexual behavior and the onset of the AIDS crisis encouraged an exigency Rustin could no longer ignore. For Rustin, a man who spoke of politics and human rights, this homophobic legislation connected deeply to the causes for which he fought, as well as his own personal experience. The de facto criminalization of gay relationships forced the issue and made personal choices public

concerns. Gays were as worthy of protection, both under the law and in American society, as members of any other marginalized group (Podair 107).

While Rustin's career of social justice would push him toward speaking out on behalf of LGBT rights, it was Rustin's public profile as a gay man in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement that also created an exigence for his discourse. Beginning in 1969 a police raiding of the Stonewall Inn led to nights of rioting throughout Greenwich Village, New York. D'Emilio describes how "within a matter of months gay liberation groups were forming in cities and university towns around the country" (*Lost Prophet* 488). Over the course of a few years the movement spread across the country at various college campuses and urban environments. In cities such as San Francisco the movement gained traction in mobilizing against police harassment and flexing economic muscle through boycotts and protests. Over time, this movement mobilized against the pervasive homophobia at almost every level of society, and created a vast network of social institutions to facilitate their goals. Yet, given the closeted nature of time, the gay rights movement of the 1980s lacked the voices of prominent homosexuals of stature (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 488). While many feared the consequences of speaking openly about their own sexual orientation, Rustin represented a figure whose sexual identity was literally a matter of Congressional record and thus an ideal orator for the movement. As a matter of public record, and as someone who had already paid a heavy price for his intersectional identities, Rustin had little to lose. Meanwhile, in New York City a Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights enlisted Rustin in its efforts to break the legislative logjam of a city council measure to add sexual orientation to the list of protected categories of its human rights code (D'Emilio *Lost Prophet* 489). The result of which were two speeches delivered to LGBT audiences that provide a useful area for intersectional analysis.

In June 1986, Rustin spoke at a rally held outside the federal courthouse at Foley Square in New York City in which he delivered an address entitled “From Montgomery to Stonewall.” That same month Rustin gave a lecture called “The New Niggers are Gays” at the national conference of Black and White Men Together, an organization focused on supporting integrationalism inside and outside of the gay community. Analysis of these two pieces of discourse highlights the intersections of race and sexuality within Rustin’s rhetoric.

From Montgomery to Stonewall. In his speech “From Montgomery to Stonewall” Rustin created a rhetorical experience of representational intersectionality that united the history of the U.S. Civil Rights struggle with the contemporary Gay Rights Movement. Representational intersectionality is concerned with “how images of race and gender combine to construct larger narratives” (Crenshaw 223). Rustin’s techniques strove to invoke and appropriate the U.S. Civil Rights narrative. Activists of the time drew heavily on rhetorical and strategic analogies to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement – seeking parallels in non-discrimination legislation. At the same time, opposition to the Gay Rights movement challenged the claim to the moral legacy of the U.S. Civil Rights movement (Chambers 6).

From the start, Rustin appropriated the narrative archetype of the U.S. Civil Rights struggle through the invocation of Rosa Parks and other key figures of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. He stated, “In 1955 When Rosa Parks sat down and began the Montgomery Bus Protest, if anyone had said that it would be the beginning of a most extraordinary revolution, most people, including myself, would have doubted it. But revolutionary beginnings are often unpredictable” (Rustin 271). The significance of representing Parks in the context of a gay rights speech lies in that he was able to establish the memory of that event as the “beginning.” Rustin’s use of memory cogently constructed historical events to fit the rhetorical purpose of the speech.

Rustin's tactics reflected what rhetorical theorist Barbie Zelizer identifies as "collective memory," which contains "collective actions determined and shaped by the group" for the purpose of "identity formation, power, authority, cultural norms, and social integration" (214). Zelizer was able to outline how social movements utilize collective memory to piece together the mosaic of images of what the group becomes overtime (227). Through this rhetorical construction, Rustin located the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as a starting point for what he interpreted as a legacy of human rights – a legacy that the gay rights movement was sure to inherit. Rustin then used collective memory as he recounted that the Russian Revolution began when "some women in a factory were cold" and provided a narrative of the Revolution of 1917, as starting through a misinterpretation of soldiers who defied the expectations of its leaders. Consequentially, the employment of an African American progressive man wielding Russia as an example in the midst of the Cold War intensifies Rustin's use of collective memory and increases the danger of the discourse.

Through representational intersectionality, Rustin was able to combine issues of race and sexuality to construct larger narratives. Rustin seemingly imparted to his audience the notion that action can be a result of unintended consequence. He then went on to discuss social change through the lens of two well-known and effective movements. This framing was brought to its logical conclusion in the concluding passage when he connected two divergent struggles to the contemporary history of the gay rights struggle:

Consider now gay rights. In 1969, in New York of all places, in Greenwich Village, a group of gay people were in a bar. Recall that the 1960s was a period of extreme militancy-there was antiwar demonstrations, Civil Rights demonstrations, and women's rights demonstrations. The patrons of the bar added gay rights demonstration to the list.....That was the beginning of an extraordinary revolution, similar to the Montgomery Bus Boycott in that it was not expected that anything extraordinary would occur. (Rustin 272)

Rustin's employment of collective memory, as seen through the shaping of the events of Stonewall in 1969, created a logical progression of social change succeeding from the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Russian Revolution. This connection of social movements provided authority and credibility to the cause of the gay rights movement in that it built upon what society already deemed as an appropriate and noble cause—the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. The purpose of this construction created an interconnected bond between accepted movements of the past to Rustin's present gay rights cause. In stating, "Gay people must continue this protest," here, for the first time, Rustin utilized his collective construction of social change as a legacy to be continued and, most importantly, established gay rights activists as the inheritors of this legacy (Rustin 273). Through this representational intersectionality, Rustin joined the issues of racial resistance and heterosexism to create a unified rhetorical space for resistance by both groups for the sake of the other.

Beyond Rustin's use of memory, his intersection of race and sexuality brought to light a moral imperative for the gay rights movement. First, the discourse outlined the "four burdens" or "four aspects of responsibility" which set up the moral inheritance a gay rights movement must address. In the Montgomery speech, he worked through overcoming "fear," "self-hate," "denial," and, most importantly, to "control the extent to which people can publicly manifest antigay sentiment" (Rustin 273). Here, Rustin exercised moral inheritance to drive his audience toward action. He accomplished this by establishing the role of the gay rights movement as continuing the work begun by U.S. Civil Rights groups that came before:

Our job is not to get those people who dislike us to love us. Nor was our aim in the Civil Rights Movement to get prejudiced white people to love us. Our aim was to try to create the kind of America legislatively, psychologically, such that even though some whites continued to hate us, they could not openly manifest that hate. That's our job today: to control the extent to which people can publicly manifest antigay sentiment. (Rustin, 273)

What made Rustin's rhetoric intriguing is the way he deftly legitimized the gay rights movement through his experiences of the "aims" of U.S. Civil Rights. In this sense, Rustin avoided the characterization of "opportunistic" cast-upon rhetor that appropriated the U.S. Civil Rights Movement in service of gay rights rhetoric. For Rustin, his lived experience at the intersection of U.S. Civil Rights and Gay Rights provided a historical lesson on responsibility and how to communicate for social change in the midst of vehement oppression. Rustin not only advocated for the use of these lessons by the gay community, he suggested that appropriation is inevitable.

Further, Rustin's representational intersection of race and sexuality persuaded his audience to take action. In his Montgomery speech, he outlined "four burdens which gays along with every other despised group, whether it is blacks following slavery or Jews fearful of Germany, must address" (Rustin 272). Rustin's establishment of gay rights in connection with African American struggles with slavery, or the Jewish Holocaust, painted a striking picture of gay rights as a group beset by victimization. Rustin worked through his outsider status to create an intersectional identity that united for mutual action. This grouping of history proved fitting with the development of what African American gay rights activist Marlon Riggs noted as the "perilous road of cultural and spiritual redemption through and deleting and distorting from the historical record the multiplicity of identities around color, gender, and sexuality which inform the African American experience" (295). This rhetorical placement of gay men and lesbians as victims of oppression equal to that of African Americans rhetorically allowed for an identity that was both African American and homosexual. Through his constructions of homosexuals as a socially-cognizant group, Rustin helped constitute an undeniable voice that demanded action.

The New Niggers are Gays. Rustin's intersectionality as both an African American and a gay man was also evidenced in his speech, "The New Niggers are Gays." In this speech, he wove

together a collective identity that related the experience of race and sexualities. Initially, Rustin's gay rights rhetoric employed rhetorical moves that established "groupness" within the struggles of the 1980s. Groupness is that which is "embraced by the affirmation rhetoric of pro-gay rhetors while anti-gay opponents deny that gays are a social group to block the expansion of lesbian and gay claims at the level of premise" (Jacobs 744). As previously noted, the *Bowers vs. Hardwick* decision flatly refused to recognize the LGBT community, and any inherent rights thereof, as a social group. As such, building a unified identity of gay rights as a collective group would be the primary task of any rhetor, like Rustin, hoping to motivate change.

In addition, for Rustin to effectively establish the homosexual community as a "group" he relied on connections and commonalities within the African American community. According to Jacobs, early rhetors within the gay rights movement carried the motif of a "group seeking relief from oppression" and characteristically positioned themselves as an oppressed collection of people through imagery of "the most harassed persecuted minority group in history" (727). Likewise, Rustin's invocation of "the new 'niggers' are gays" employed a similar strategy. By exclaiming that "gay people are the new barometer for social change" Rustin outlined the unique attribution of groupness. By conceptualizing homosexuals as a "people" he firmly established a cohesive unit that implied race. Further, his foundation of gays as a social group contained unmatched utility in that he set up the cohesion of gay and lesbians as the definitive social movement of the day:

Indeed, if you want to know whether today people believe in democracy, if you want to know whether they are true democrats, if you want to know whether they are human rights activists, the question to ask is, 'what about gay people?' because that is now the litmus paper by which this democracy is to be judged. The barometer for social change is measured by selecting the group which is most mistreated....the question of social change should be framed with the most vulnerable group in mind: gay people. (Rustin 275)

Rustin's identification of homosexuals as a social group is evident in this passage; however, what is significant for rhetorical studies is the composition and classification of gays and lesbians as the "most vulnerable" group. He established a demand for recognition of the homosexual groupness as more than just a presence, but as one more deserving of attention and resolution than any other social group. There is a subtext of "or else" to the necessity of legitimizing gays and lesbians as a social group. This statement coming from a prominent figure from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement likely carried weight for his audience of African American gay men.

Moreover in the "New Niggers Are Gays," Rustin further employed inheritance to create a responsibility for the gay community, stating "we stand in the center of progress towards democracy, we have a terrifying responsibility to the whole society" (Rustin 275). In this regard, Rustin utilized the moral inheritance to suggest the need for coalitions among social groups. Moral inheritance is defined as ensuring "that the struggles of one's ancestors are sanctified through the conscientious actions of the community" (Black "Native Resistance" 73). Curiously, Rustin's rhetorical conceptions of ancestry for the gay rights movement were blends of social movements. His four aspects of responsibility elaborated the need to move beyond issues of sexuality, and to work beyond "justice for itself alone" (Rustin 217). In stating that "unless the community fights for all, it is fighting for nobody, least of all for itself," and "it is inconsistent for gay people to be anti-Semitic or racist," Rustin followed the notion that as the most oppressed group in contemporary America, its success would rely on coalitions forged from within similar communities, including African Americans (Rustin 276). As an organizer famous for the adamant advocacy of "human rights everywhere," Rustin was uniquely qualified to deliver this important message regarding the building of bridges within minority identities. His prescription for gay people 'to fight for a new mood in the United States...ready to fight for a

radicalization of this society” moved the image of the gay movement beyond a one of mere victimage (Rustin 276), and developed a social group capable of responding to meaningful crisis in the world. This transition from oppression to coalition suggested Rustin’s unique ability to speak on behalf of both gay rights and U.S. Civil Rights Movements for more valuable contributions to social change. He traced the overlapping oppressions of race, class, and sexuality to testify for the need of progressive coalitions. He demanded “the gay community cannot work for justice for itself alone. Unless the community fights for *all*, it is fighting for nobody” (Rustin 276). Rustin looked at the ways in which the intersecting categories of identity could become parts of larger narratives for the betterment of all marginalized groups.

Conclusions

Considering Rustin’s discourse across temporal and situational spaces, it is imperative to examine the conclusions and rhetorical implications that spring from the analysis of Rustin’s political, structural, and political intersectionality. While Rustin’s 40 years of public discourse is fraught with shifts and changes in beliefs, there are semblances of unity across the rhetorical landscapes that inform understanding of intersectional identity across sexual and racial spaces. Rustin’s use of identity, rhetorical shifts, and coalitional work are both shaped and constrained by heteronormative and racial structures.

Identity. Throughout the discourse, Rustin neglected to directly state his identity in strictly African American or LGBTQ terms. In his racial liberation rhetoric, Rustin adopted a voice that was distant, almost third person, when speaking on issues of race. In “The Negro and Nonviolence,” “The Meaning of Birmingham,” and “From Protest to Politics” he communicated using a removed voice when referencing the positionality of African Americans. Instead of speaking “as a negro” or the using the first person, his discourse described “the Negro” as in

“The Negro in his despair” or “the Negro has lost faith.” Across all his discourse Rustin seemed to have to explain his identity from the outside lens, not by maneuvering from personal experience. He did not share the various homophobic censure and upbraiding he experienced throughout his career as a public intellectual. Instead, Rustin described the community to which he identified while removing all sense of identity; there is a sense of concealment to his expression.

This is not surprising considering that Rustin was a controversial presence among the African American rhetorical leadership. His personal history of sexuality and arrests haunted him from organization to organization. In fact, a primary criticism that prevented Rustin from attaining official leadership status among U.S. Civil Rights leaders was the concern that Rustin’s “scars” would expose the entire racial community to moral critique (D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 339). Previous conceptions of the discursive limitations of gay men of color suggest that “gay men of color must identify with one group more than the other, despite the fact that he cannot fit comfortably in either” (Mingo 562) This study suggests that, for fear of exposure, these constraints seemed to result in a discursive effect in which Rustin cloaked not only his sexual, but racial identity as well. Concealing Rustin’s discourse also placed his racial perspective in the closet and removed marks of identity. Positioning Rustin's public address as a connection between rhetorical identities of African American and gay works against the regressive politics that African American Studies scholar Siobhan Somerville suggests are inherent to the mainstream tendency to analogize race and sexuality focused social movements as separate (167). Rustin’s place at the intersection of race and sexuality allows discernment how discriminatory constraints on both sides impact and work against rhetoric employed by on both race and sexual rhetoric.

Rhetorical Shifts. Rustin's place as a gay man in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement also informed understanding of the political shifts Rustin made throughout the history of his discourse. As he shifted from pacifist to racial activist, from the radical to the structural, so too did his rhetoric reflect these ideological movements. The elements of fear and militant imagery Rustin used in his discourse prior to 1964 took a sharp political and economic turn in years that followed. Once again, the heteronormative functions of the U.S. Civil Rights community constrained his discursive capability. Prior to 1963, Rustin's sexual identity was known only among internal pacifist communities. He was able to work alongside, and tactically advise the icons of U.S. Civil Rights, such as Martin Luther King. Rustin was an agitator unshackled by the role of a permanent place of leadership in any major organization. Yet, the public knowledge of his 1953 arrest via Adam Clayton Powell and Strom Thurman put him in the direct line of visibility to the public. While U.S. Civil Rights leaders rallied to his defense, Rustin himself was not allowed to speak. The issue of his sexuality was never directly addressed and the message remained entirely on the upcoming march. He was essentially protected by the political structures he railed against. Here, Rustin exemplifies the forms and formats of intersectional rhetoric "which places multiple rhetorical forms on equal footing, is not leader-centered, and draws from a number of diverse discursive political or rhetorical conventions (Enck-Wanzer 177). Through his varied and vibrant rhetorical shifts Rustin's intersectional identities molded and shaped the form and format of his communication. As such, Rustin's emphasis on the structural and political complexion of discourse was informed by his sexual and racial identities; he could no longer afford to cut across the grain of public sentiment.

Intersectionality. Finally, analysis of Rustin's discourse connects Rustin's intersectional identity through rhetorical coalitions. In his discourse Rustin spoke to audiences reaching across

racial, economic, and sexual divides. He was able to provide the power of lived experience as a gay man of color as an act of rhetorical suasion. Rustin's coalition was not constructed through identity politics alone, but through mutual benefit of public action. Rustin's rhetoric provided a bridge to connect the racial struggle to a variety of contexts and identifications through his conception of coalitions of progressive forces. Rustin's discourse did not affirm that one identity must be subsumed to reach across divides. Rather, Rustin conceived that it is in "contradictions" those progressive forces can "agitate the right questions" (Rustin 129). As an historic figure, Rustin provided guidance to a new generation on the intersection of race and sexuality. Through his rhetorical moves, he opened a new gateway to a problem long plaguing the gay rights movement: history. Generational perspectives of how a movement changes over time is a tool previously withheld from gay rhetors, as homosexuality is an identity, and therefore not "inherited" in the same manner as race. Critical scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. outlined the impasse between the rhetoric of historic prejudice wielded by the U.S. Civil Rights Movement as unusable and in direct opposition to the rhetoric of virulent, contemporary hatred espoused to the homosexual movement (27). Yet, in Rustin's gay rights discourse his intersectional identity did not lead to the choice of identification with one or the other. Instead, Rustin allowed for his experience as a gay man of color, and his experience as a U.S. Civil Rights activist, to illuminate the inconsistencies of gay identity. Through over 40 years of rhetorical activism Rustin was able to blend together the historical lessons from various social groups to bind together a force for the common good of human rights. Rustin's emphasis of contradictions in the context of coalitions implied a form of intersectional rhetorical theory in which the nature of public discourse is best understood by formulating discourse around those that fail to fit constrictive molds. Through his connection of the achievements of U.S. Civil Rights as a "litmus test" for social change, Rustin

provided a pathway for future rhetors seeking to utilize the U.S. Civil Rights memory in terms of its revolutionary spirit, rather than through sympathy alone. Given this, it is imperative to categorize Rustin as an important figure within each movement separately in order to provide a viable rhetorical symbol to build coalitions within the African American and gay rights communities simultaneously.

However, as his voice did not require a declaration of gayness or blackness, Rustin's identity allowed him freer use of discursive strategies for both groups. Bayard's gay rights discourse avoided the coming out tactics that are synonymous with the means of establishing credibility within that movement. Similarly, critiquing Rustin as representational of the African American race proved just as slippery. Critical scholar Dwight A. McBride argues that when taking the tone of representing race, gay African American public figures perform the role of representation and "mask[ed]" their sexuality. McBride suggests the role of a public spokesperson on race for an African American gay man to be impossible, stating, "we can scarcely imagine an instance which narrating or even claiming one's gay or lesbian identity would authenticate or legitimate oneself as a racial representative" (225). In his essays and speeches, Rustin recounted his history and role within the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, thus inverting this critique by choosing to represent himself as both a rhetor speaking on behalf of the gay rights community, and a member of the African American circles. The effect of "The New Niggers Are Gays" attracted the attention of local African American officials who flinched at his appropriation of the U.S. Civil Rights narrative. In response, Rustin admonished "the hypocrisy of those who opposed civil rights protections for gays while vigorously supporting them for African Americans was obvious, and Rustin did not hesitate to point that out" (Podair 106). Rustin's frequent invocation of lessons from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement connected two

historically-opposed movements -- the idea being that a place exists for African Americans within the gay rights movement. In other words, the two are not mutually exclusive, but rather, inextricably linked.

Rustin employed strategies which provided a useful lens for the intersection between the discourse of race and sexual identity. Rustin was a gadfly, he was an agitator, and he was an activist, but he was also a hero to a world that has forgotten the prospects of social change through the ballot not the bullet. We must recover Rustin, and revive his memory along both its storied and sordid twists and turns toward its theme of coalition over division. The gay community must understand its African American heritage if it is ever going to have the success of the U.S. Civil Rights movement in moving the nations barometer for ignorance. The African American community must also embrace its queer lineage to acknowledge the figures that made the nation's most powerful movement, move. Therefore Chapter Five will suitably explore Rustin's contemporary memory through representation and resistance.

CHAPTER 5

RUSTIN IN PUBLIC MEMORY

The public memory of Bayard Rustin offers a site of resistance that in turn creates a space of empowerment concerning the discursive history of race and sexuality. This chapter seeks to examine the discursive memory field of Rustin to question how African American and sexual identities are remembered through contemporary representations in both film and public memorializing.⁸ As discussed in Chapter One, the memory of Rustin navigates both the complications and possibilities of LGBTQ and African American history and helps produce agency for queer subjectivities. Chapter Two confirmed the power of projects focused on counter-memory to battle the formation of silences, traumas and erasure that marginalize subaltern voices. Extending this work, rhetorician Thomas Dunn focuses the gaze of critical scholarship upon the space of public memory as it “operates not as historical fact but as a historical interpretation for the purpose of making public argument” (“Great Fag” 439). While Chapter Three concentrated on the historical context of Rustin to examine his excision from public memory, the present chapter questions how Rustin’s memory is revived and articulated. Chapter Four outlined the various forms of intersectional rhetoric employed by Rustin. This

⁸ See Jason Edward Black. “Memories Of The Alabama Creek War, 1813-1814: U.S. Governmental And Native Identities At The Horseshoe Bend National Military Park.” *American Indian Quarterly* 33.2 (2009): 200-229. Black’s study of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend constructs a memory field composed of public museums, battle sites, guided tours, websites, and online packets for educators (205). Similarly, this study composes the field of Rustin’s memory through documentary, proclamations, discussion guides, and on line curriculum for educators. Herein, my conceptualization of “memory field” comes largely from Jason Edward Black who defines it in terms of a “composition of texts that follow a fused approach” (207).

chapter picks up on that analysis of Rustin's primary discourse and moves to an exploration of Rustin's intersectional identity as negotiated through contemporary appropriations of his memory. I question how contemporary texts recuperate and circulate Rustin's memory and what these revivalist memories signify for memory, race, and sexuality as a site of resistance.

While memory served as part of the five canons of classical rhetoric, contemporary rhetorical scholars are concerned not with the memorization of speeches and perfection of performances of famous declamations, but with the constitutive power of memory to articulate moments of the past to serve as a present argument and future instantiation of publics (Dickenson et. al). Further, scholarship has affirmed that memory has the power to disrupt the heteronormative discursive structures that sever and silence the voices of sexual identities (Castiglia, Cloud). Chapter Two offered insight into the manner in which collective memory is created and enacted through Zelizer's six basic premises of collective memory (218). These tenets will be suitably explored through contemporary texts of Rustin's memory while concomitantly contributing to a better understanding of the case studies. Further, while Chapter Four attempted to revive and recover the authentic and intersectional voice of Rustin, this chapter deals with the contemporary publics and counterpublics that occupy the nodes of queer memory.

In this chapter I also build upon the scholarship of rhetorician Charles Morris, who calls for a queering of public address which destabilizes "sexual normalcy and all its various content manifestations" while taking into account that identity cannot be conceived as either gay *or* African American (*Queering* 5). Hence, I will argue that public memories of Rustin create a site of intersectional memory of race and sexuality through its queering of Rustin's public memory, intersectional identity, and the troubling of U.S. Civil Rights memory. This chapter proceeds to

work through Rustin's public memory by applying rhetorical analysis to the documentary *Brother Outsider* to investigate how the film remembers Rustin and the implications of that remembrance for queer public address and memory of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. The analysis then turns to a polysemic reading of Rustin's memory as seen through a series of discussion and curriculum guides which interrogates the appropriation of Rustin's memory and its consequence for queer theory, intersectionality, and public address. Taken together, this mélange of texts and tenets provide an opportunity to develop an exploratory schema of intersectional counter memory.

Brother Outsider and Public Memory

The rhetorical functions of Rustin's memory can be suitably explored through an analysis of the documentary film *Brother Outsider*. The analysis will progress by situating the documentary as an appropriate vehicle of discourse through a brief summary of rhetorical critiques of documentary film, after which I shall apply the frameworks of public memory to the text of *Brother Outsider* to reveal its conceptions of Rustin's racial and sexual identities.

Film As Discourse

Analyzing Rustin's memory through the lens of documentary film requires an understanding of the critical readings of film in rhetorical studies. Rhetoricians Jerry Hendrix and James Wood argue for a critical methodology that allows analysis to deal with both fictional and non-fictional films that serve a "persuasive purpose" (105). They contend that film has a unique discursive appeal in that it "communicates in ways which are in some respects radically different from the ways of other media and even the apparently passive viewer is actively responding to the film on a number of levels" (Hendrix and Wood, 106). Critical rhetorician David Blakesley adds that film functions to serve as mode of identification. Specifically, he

argues that the rhetoric of film reiterates Kenneth Burke's terministic screen in which the means of representation "direct the attention to one field rather than another such that our observations of experience are implications of the particular terms themselves" (Blakesley "Terministic Screen" 114). Blakesley conceptualizes film, documentary in particular, as a form of terministic screen in which the film's direction reflects the representation of a particular subject. This concept is particularly fitting when dealing with the subject of public memory as a film only produced a reflection of its source material and thus serves as a form of argument. In addition, critical film scholar Bill Nichols elaborates that film helps us to mingle our ideologies within the world around us, "through representations that fix us in an imaginary relationship to the material conditions of existence" (44). The validity of exploring how visual representations create spaces for identification will assist in exploring Rustin through *Brother Outsider*.

Hendrix and Wood also provide a model through which to analyze film using the Burkean concepts of identification. They suggest that the critic evaluate several component of film: "What means – common premises, symbols, stylistic characteristics, and the like are used in the film to develop a sense of consubstantiality among groups or to achieve identification of viewer with filmic content" (Hendrix and Wood, 118). Films also offer the means of connecting to contemporary issues of rhetorical criticism. Karen Foss accepts the critical premise of documentaries as rhetorical artifacts and argues for heuristic value of documentary in educating rhetorical theory (51). Foss's conceptualizations that documentary film is a valuable source for rhetorical critique in that it simultaneously broadens the scope of public address while allowing critics to explore tenets of rhetorical theory in an entirely new medium. Connecting film to memory studies, feminist film scholar Jennifer Borda suggests that documentary "functions as a rhetorical device to capture a dramatic sense of the past" within the context of "a critical

historical moment” (159). Thus, films such as *Brother Outsider* operate rhetorically and can be analyzed to understand both the persuasive elements and the representations of the past as actively functioning arguments about the present.

Rhetorical Context of Brother Outsider

I now turn to an analysis of the film *Brother Outsider* to explicate the intersectional memory of Rustin. The film is the brainchild of Bennett Singer, an author and filmmaker responsible for *Eyes on the Prize* and other documentaries on U.S. Civil Rights, and Nancy Katts, a filmmaker and PBS producer whose previous work focused on female Vietnam War veterans (“Brother Outsider Filmmakers”). Singer first discovered Rustin during his research on *Eyes* and felt inspired “that a gay man who was really remarkably open about being gay in the '40s and '50s and '60s had been at the center of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement” (Nair 1). Singer and Katts’ films both use representational forms of documentary, which collect interviews, archival footage, and historical data as source material for their films (Nair). *Brother Outsider* premiered as part of the PBS documentary series “POV,” in 2003, with funding by the Independent Television Service in association with the National Black Programming Consortium. *Brother Outsider* documents the biography of Rustin through the creative combination of traditional documentary techniques and a cache of historical artifacts including public speeches, published interviews, found letters, and unpublished texts. The film premiered as part of the Sundance Film Festival in January of 2003, and since then has gone on to win critical acclaim earning over eight best documentary awards, seven audience favorite awards, and the GLAAD Media Award For Outstanding Documentary (“Brother Outsider”). *Time* magazine writer Andrew Sullivan proclaimed the film’s ability to attest to historical silence, stating “In the struggle for African American Dignity, he was perhaps the most critical figure

that many people never heard of. It's worth taking a look at the life and lessons of one Bayard Rustin" (Sullivan 1-2).

Outside its positive critical reception, the film has served a scholarly and performative function through hundreds of screenings and subsequent discussion forums at college campuses throughout the United States. For instance, The Chicago Urban League held screenings and special forums in which Urban League President Roderick Hawkins emphasized the importance of passing along the film to as many audiences as possible ("Brother Outsider"). Screenings have been presented in conjunction with screenings of *Eyes on the Prize*, and part of African American Heritage Month at the University of Alabama, as well as during events commemorating the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. ("Programs, Events at University of Alabama"). In addition, Scholars such as feminist Barbara Smith have also lauded the film with praise, noting "*Brother Outsider* makes a groundbreaking contribution to understanding how the politics of sexuality and gender shaped the Black Civil Rights Movement. It is a fascinating portrait of a remarkable human being" ("Brother Outsider The Life of").

Given the film's prominence as a text for social change, and its potential to invigorate public remembrance of Rustin, it is imperative to analyze the film to understand how *Brother Outsider* articulates the memory of Rustin. To achieve this, I examine the film for elements I observed and interpreted as connecting to queer theory, public memory, and intersectionality. The film was coded along frequency and intensity to develop categories for the representations and suatory arguments at work in the film. I argue that *Brother Outsider* attempts to recuperate Rustin's memory using both dominant and resistive depictions of his identities. Further, the film employs collective memory that equates the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and contemporary Gay Rights Movements without acknowledging modes of difference. *Brother Outsider* achieves this

through the depicting the dichotomy of public and private sexuality, reflection of erasure and trauma, and problems of U.S. Civil Rights public memory.

Public and Private Sexuality

To begin, *Brother Outsider* seeks to sexualize and queer the memory of Rustin through the dichotomies of public and private intimacies. The film's treatment of Rustin's memory establishes a heteronormative structure through the juxtaposition of his public self and private sex through private letters and oral histories. For instance, throughout the film, Rustin is remembered prominently through archival footage of his public appearances. Clips of lectures he gave follow songs he recorded, while interviews of his public activism begin to surface in the film's narrative. These frames of public memory ask the viewer to remember a public Rustin, who was vocal in his fight for racial justice, yet immediately after establishing his ethos through public speech the film articulates Rustin's sexuality which is proved through private announcements. For example, the film presents a video clip of Rustin giving a public lecture on breaking racial barriers in his home town and getting arrested for refusing to leave a restaurant reserved for whites only. The film follows these public acts of heroics with a voiceover from a private letter published after his death in which Rustin declares "I never said to my grandmother, that you know I am gay, but I told her I enjoy being with guys at high school parties. Her reply was well I suppose that's what you need to do. It was never an encouragement, but it was a recognition so I never had feelings of guilt" (Kates et al.). The film treats Rustin's admission of sexuality not through his own public voice, but through the context of private matters. Thus, while the film offers articulates a node of Rustin's memory that embraces his sexuality, it does so in terms that reproduce the constraints that kept it hidden. In remembering Rustin's public

advocacy in terms of public oration, but his sexuality in terms of private correspondence, the film implies that statements of sexuality belong out of the public frame.

The private aspect of Rustin's homosexuality is established a second time through his relationship with partner Davis Platt. The audience first meets Platt during a voiceover in which an interviewer describes Rustin's travels to lecture at colleges as an opportunity to meet "like-minded persons." The direct juxtaposition of "like minded persons" and the narrative of Rustin's former lover insinuate "like minded person" as a euphemism for sexual orientation. Platt appears as a kind and congenial elderly man who describes going to see Rustin's brilliant and fascinating speech on the subject of race, "Bayard appeared on the scene and for some reason he looked at my direction and I looked at his direction and something happened" (Kates et al.). While the film claims that Rustin and Platt had a relationship, it fails to create support for this sexual relationship in public terms. For instance, when Rustin is sent to prison as a conscientious objector, Platt tells the story of how they had to conceal their private love from the public: "We were determined to stay in touch with each other, there was no question I saw him as my lover, he saw me as his lover, and it was clear that our letters could not express clearly what we felt. So we developed a code, and I would write about myself as a woman" (Kates et al.). Platt's interview frames Rustin's sexuality as a secret and showcases the gendered forms of constraint at work as Rustin attempts to articulate his sexuality. In its focus on the hidden aspects of Rustin and Platt's relationship, *Brother Outsider* reiterates the secrecy at work within queer historical memory fields, which "renders queerness a matter of secrecy, trapping a public in voyeurism rather than enabling critical reflection" (Cloud 31). The codes used to discuss their relationship are not questioned by the filmmakers and the film proceeds as though there was nothing entirely

problematic about what was articulated. As such, the film reflects the capability of discourse to reify dominant structures through its attempts to articulate and liberate.

The film finally articulates the dichotomies between public and private sexualities in its handling of Rustin's infamous 1953 Pasadena arrest. In his biography of Rustin, journalist Jervis Anderson accounts how two men approached Rustin during a lecture in Pasadena, California on January 20. Later that evening the police discovered Rustin "in sexual acts with two young men" in a parked car outside his hotel (Anderson 153). That afternoon he was arraigned before a local judge and sentenced to 60 days in the county jail. The story was picked up by the *Los Angeles Times* and sent shockwaves throughout the pacifist community. Berlant and Warner argue that heteronormativity depends on the fantasy of a public/private split that shields heterointimacy and effects the "demonization of any represented sex" (550). The facts of Rustin's sexual encounters in public are similarly demonized. The film brings forth Rustin's arrest for "lewd sexual behavior" as a key point of conflict in the narrative of Rustin's life. It begins by citing the FBI field report that indicates Rustin's arrest for "sex perversion" and his sentencing to 60 days in the county jail (Kates et al.). The specific facts of what exactly Rustin did to earn provoke the charge are unspoken by this official document. Accordingly, the film introduces an interview with Dave McReynolds, a colleague of Rustin's in the pacifist organization known as the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) from 1957-1961, who chastises the arrest, noting, "This was the only arrest in which he knew he was wrong. I don't mean morally wrong because it was a sexual encounter. I mean it was stupid to get arrested in the back seat of a car with two guys in a public place, and he knew this" (Kates et al.). Rustin's sexual act broke the barriers of distinction between private and public intimacies defined by Berlant and Warner. The film presents the shock and awe that rippled through the pacifist communities that

“this person with whom I worked closely for many many years was going to be taken away from the work”(Kates et al.). Rustin is depicted with his head cast downward in shadow as the audience learns he will no longer be allowed to work in the FOR due to his public sexual escapade. While the film provides examples of Rustin’s barrier breaking along racial conflicts in challenging Jim Crow laws as positive, Rustin’s breaking of sexual boundaries is depicted as a personal failure instead of an act of social change.

While the public/private dichotomy of *Brother Outsider* presents problematic depictions of sexuality rhetorician, Jason Edward Black insists that memory sites must be understood within multiple frameworks and directions as “memories are not unidirectional. Even in the case of a colonized milieu, the oppressed are not inactive and voiceless.” (Black “Memories” 206) As such, it is important to understand the positive potentials *Brother Outsider* provides. Thus, despite the constraints of heteronormativity, *Brother Outsider* remembers Rustin as an openly gay man. He is defined in interviews by others as “having no shame in who he was ... there was no guilt associated with his sexuality” (Kates et al.). Both domestically and on foreign soil his sexuality took the form of an open secret; Gandhi acolyte Havi Prasad recognized that while in India “he was one of the first people who openly accepted homosexuality, he didn’t hide it, and that is greatest quality of Bayard Rustin. It’s just nature and I considered him to be very natural....and of course he had beautiful companions and why not” (Kates et al.). The film supports Prasad’s claims by showing pictures of Rustin centered with two youthful looking boys on either side of him. Directly following this Platt is filmed stating “he was interested in meeting lots of other people and occasionally they turned up in my bed when I wasn’t expecting them” (Kates et al.). This narrative creates consequences for Rustin’s public display of sexuality as Platt reveals this as a reason for their breakup. The open articulation of Rustin’s sexuality

effectively queers his public memory. The film ensures that open discussion of Rustin's public actions cannot avoid discussing his sexuality, thus canonizing him as a queer rhetorical figure. While this is true, the film avoids the opportune moment to rupture the split between public and private sexuality.

Erasure and Trauma

Beyond the intersections of public and private intimacies, *Brother Outsider* conceptualizes a space for queer memory through its depiction of trauma and erasure of Rustin's voice from official and historical contexts. Erasure functions within a historical moment to prevent the creation or transmission of memory (Morris *Queering* 116). Given this, the film aids in establishing the erasure from historical contexts. As it begins, the film depicts a 1960s-era Rustin standing vehemently behind a podium voicing his commitment that "we will not tolerate the beating of black people any longer, we will stay in these damn streets till every Negro can vote" (Kates et al.). Throughout the opening sequence of the film the viewer is confronted with images of Rustin leading public marches, standing defiantly, giving public talks, lecturing to large crowds, and carrying protest signs for a variety of causes. These displays of Rustin's public visibility the film cause the viewer to question why Rustin is not as equally visible within historical frameworks. A disembodied voice is tracked over archival footage of large crowds gathering in Washington, D.C. as the voice states, "I don't think without Bayard Rustin the modern U.S. Civil Rights Movement would have won half the victories it would have" (Kates et al.). These disembodied voices cut across accelerated and layered images of Bayard in front of the Lincoln Memorial, a visual reference to his participation and leadership of the famous 1963 March on Washington. As the film transitions we see a film reel foregrounding Martin Luther King Jr. walking out of a Birmingham hotel and Rustin is placed in the background. The film

pauses and shifts focus from center to Rustin in the background as a voice asks, “I can’t think of a man who was more talented, a public intellectual, an organizer unequalled in his time. Why did he remain in the background? Why was he an advisor to this, that or the other great person, but never himself coming forward in the full measure of his great talent?” (Kates et al.). As the question finishes, the camera zooms in to place Rustin at the center of the image as the word “Brother” in black text against a white background appears above his face. Simultaneously, as the image fades out the word “Outsider” appears, a seeming answer to the question. As the film progresses it becomes clear that his sexuality is the reason why he remained in the background.

Subsequently, the film’s representation of Rustin’s relationship with mentor and FOR leader AJ Muste suggests an initial point of erasure. Following a lighthearted segment on Rustin as a figure of culture in Harlem in the 1940s, his ex-lover Platt discusses his experience of visiting Rustin at the offices of the FOR. While black and white images of the two men side by side are displayed for the viewer, Platt recalls feeling the tension between Muste claiming, “It bothered him that Bayard was gay, but there came a time when AJ really put the pressure on Bayard to give up his gay ways, his homosexual way of life. He saw this as a threat to his effectiveness and the FOR’s effectiveness. AJ tried very hard to get Bayard to break up with me and for me to break up with Bayard” (Kates et al.). The film exemplifies how Rustin’s open sexuality became a source of frustration for members of FOR’s establishment. In providing Platt’s narrative, *Brother Outsider* makes visible the ways in which authoritative figures, such as Muste, attempt to erode and silence Rustin’s open homosexuality.

Though Rustin initially resists this form of silencing, his arrest in Pasadena ultimately forces him to succumb to the need to silence his own sexuality. In the film, various friends and colleagues attest to the trauma that occurred during Rustin’s arrest. For instance, a fellow gay

FOR member questions the outcome of the event if this had happened in today's time period, and War Resister League member Bill Sutherland proposes, "whether he technically resigned he was basically thrown out of the FOR" (Kates et al.). The film presents the viewer with the testimony Robert Ascher, a psychologist appointed by Muste to fix Rustin's "problem":

The main point of my work was to have him understand that being homosexual that was just fine, but society around him couldn't deal with that and he was just making it so much worse for himself to keep throwing it in the faces of Quakers, and Muste and this community whose help you want. Since they can't stand it, shut up! Which he accepted, quiet it down, it isn't a central part of who you.....the work you are doing. (Kates et al.)

The inclusion of this interview is significant in that it rhetorically situates Rustin's persona as a token of erasure which requires him to sublimate his sexuality. In stating that he needed to "shut up" and "quiet it down" *Brother Outsider* provides a representation of Rustin's consequence for being open about homosexuality. Thereafter, the film shifts to a picture of a downcast Rustin and includes a voiceover of an actor reading a private letter written by Rustin in which he states, "I know now that sex must be sublimated if I am to exist in this world much longer" (Kates et al.). As these words are spoken the score of the film shifts to Rustin singing a spiritual about the need to "walk this lonesome valley, I've got to walk it for myself." While King retains his authority through his "mountaintop", Rustin is required to dwell in the valley. In its depiction of Rustin as a lone LGBTQ voice constrained by the heterosexist frameworks of the 1960s *Brother Outsider* adheres to what Cloud insists is a project of queer memory which implores a "structural relationship to heteronormativity and have suffered from it" (29).

Rustin's continual marginalization through silence and erasure is also affirmed through the film's incorporation of the various periods in which his sexuality prevented him from public participation. Chiefly, the film shifts to the Montgomery Bus Boycott to argue that Rustin taught Martin Luther King Jr. the primary methods of nonviolence. Despite his public appearances with

King, though, the film uses FBI field reports to dramatize the ways in which the government watched Rustin's every move. The narrative of a student activist contends "when the information about his sexual history and that unfortunate event in California surfaced, Bayard not wishing to jeopardize the young movement, removed himself" (Kates et al.). The film accounts for the ways in which U.S. Civil Rights leaders' homophobia served to discipline and constrain him as an outside figure through narrating the recollections of Rustin's relationship with African American democratic congressman Adam Clayton Powell. Dave McReynolds appears back on the screen and begins his story,

Johnson ran the senate and Rayburn ran the House totally, and went to the two Texans and said you have to stop this guy Rustin. Rayburn went to Adam Clayton Powell and told Adam to get Bayard out. Powell then made a speech in which he said to the press that there were immoral elements working within the Civil Rights Movement. That message was clear that it was aimed at Bayard as the immoral element, and Bayard knew that it would bring up the arrest record if he didn't get out. (Kates et al.)

Throughout the narrative, images of each politician flashes on the screen: then Senate minority leader Lyndon Banes Johnson behind a large podium hand rose in solute, Representative Sam Rayburn sitting in a dark meeting room, and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell sitting behind a lectern surrounded with microphones. The combination of these images with the spoken text reiterates the public power of homophobia and its ability to create a "homosexual panic" that institutionalizes the intolerance of sexuality at all levels of public address (Morris, "Pink Herring"). Once again the documentary exemplifies the ways in which Rustin had to adjust and sublimate his political career due to his sexual orientation. Conversely, *Brother Outsider* serves as a response to the heteronormative structures and flattening of U.S. Civil Rights memory through Rustin's erasure and constraint from public action. Director Bennett Singer describes how the filmmakers "we wanted to develop that sense of his complexity and the intersections of his identities...so we Look at both the price he paid for his openness as a gay man" (Nair, 2). The

film allows for a queer counter memory that illuminates the barriers to public life still felt by marginalized identities.

Finally, the film illuminates erasure and trauma for the field of Rustin's memory through the inclusion of the attacks by southern Senator Strom Thurmond. The viewer is first introduced to Thurmond in the context of Rustin's preparations for the March on Washington as he stands for news cameras and decries Thurmond's calls for segregation which, Rustin suggests, will lead other countries to believe that people do not have freedom in the United States. As Rustin finishes this statement his voice is cut off and a voice over by Dave McReynolds articulates Thurmond's elaborate plan to discredit Rustin. McReynolds says, "Thurmond had waited about three weeks before the March on Washington to take to the Senate floor and attack Bayard as being a homosexual with an arrest record" (qtd. in Kates et al.). Thurmond's direct testimony from the Congressional record is also incorporated into the documentary to emphasize Thurmond's focus on Rustin as being convicted of sex perversion. While on the surface it would seem Rustin's memory is to fall victim to the heteronormative demonization of public sex, in this case, Rustin's racial identity provides a form of protection. Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton affirms that Rustin was being attacked by an "enemy of the people" and remarks, "I am sure there were may have been some homophobes among black people at that point, but I am telling you that if there were they understood how to behave when Strom Thurman came forward to attack the only man who could pull off that march" (qtd. in Kates et al.). This statement coming from a woman of color signifies a form of unity and cohesion within the U.S. Civil Rights community to passively avoid the subject of Rustin's sexuality as he was threatened by a common threat. Through these depictions, *Brother Outsider* presents a counter-public memory that strain against the normative discursive elements that seek to sublimate intersectional figures.

U.S. Civil Rights Memory

While the film *Brother Outsider* creates a space to queer Rustin's public memory, the film concomitantly troubles the "master narratives" of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and employs collective memory that unites both the U.S. Civil Rights and Gay Rights Movements. Initially, the documentary serves to problematize the flattened master narrative of the U.S. Civil Rights movement. Recall the discussion from Chapter Two in which historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall concurs that U.S. Civil Rights Memory creates a palatable "master narrative" for a dominant audience that elides the more radical sects that made the movement possible (1233). Hall's conception of master narratives suggests that historical events, such as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, transforms into a simple march for racial equality. As a result of these narratives the movement's fight for gender and class issues are eclipsed. Further the timeline of Civil Rights activism becomes distorted to begin with the ruling of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and culminates with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Instead, Hall theorizes a "long Civil Rights Movement" which attests to the radical encroachments of the 1930s, accelerated during World War II and inspired a movement of movements (1235). Using Hall's conceptions, the film employs Rustin's memory to embody a "long Civil Rights Movement" through its focus on pre 1960s civil rights and labor movements.

Brother Outsider first creates a memory of a "long civil rights movement" by featuring Rustin's breaking of Jim Crow laws in the 1940s (Hall 1235). The representations of Rustin featured in the film remember him as defying bus segregation laws by sitting toward the front of the bus and refusing to move when he was asked. A developed black and white picture of Rustin placed in handcuffs flashes across the screen while the disembodied voice of Dave McReynolds speaks, "The police came and they started dragging Bayard out of his seat, and he pointed to a

little white child across the aisle and he said if I move this child will not know that injustice is taking place here” (qtd. in Kates et al.). The film employs quotations from Rustin’s essay “The Negro vs. Jim Crow” as well as narratives from his nephew Lewis John to note, “he did the bus thing before Rosa Parks” (qtd. in Kates et al.). By positioning the memory of Rustin’s actions within the framework of the actions of Rosa Parks, the film provides a counter-memory that troubles that “flattened” master narratives that the U.S. Civil Rights Movement began in Montgomery in 1956 (Hall 1235). The analogy works to destabilize the typical story that the U.S. public has come to know and adopt.

In addition, the film also deftly navigates the “master narrative” of the March on Washington as a march solely for segregation by restoring the rightful purpose of the march into public memory. For instance, Rustin’s aide Rachelle Horowitz provides a corrected historical account of the march claiming, “The March on Washington was originally conceived by A. Phillip Randolph in January as a march for a higher minimum wage and economic issues” (qtd. in Kates et al.). The film cuts away to images of Randolph carrying a protest sign to end Jim Crow laws and a flyer for the original 1941 march. A voiceover from Rustin, whose source is unidentified, calls the march “the first mass protest ever conceived by negro Americans.” The film transitions to an image of the headquarters of the 1963 March on Washington marked by a banner that calls it the “March for Jobs and Freedom.” At the same time, *Brother Outsider* depicts the struggles for racial equality beyond the March on Washington by focusing on Rustin’s life as an advocate economic justice for African Americans. Rhetorical scholar Jennifer Borda analyzes how documentary employs representational strategies of realism and the documentary form to put forward “a correction to the historical record that counters established versions of events” (159). Similarly, the connection of the March on Washington to economic

justice as well as its historical placement in the 1940s, allows Rustin's memory to precipitate a counter narrative that broadens and contextualizes elements of U.S. Civil Rights memory.

Collective Memory

Aside from broadening U.S. Civil Rights narratives, *Brother Outsider* recalls a collective memory that unites the U.S. Civil Rights Movement with contemporary gay rights discourse. Remember that social movements utilize collective memory with the goal of "piecing together the mosaic" of images into a picture of what the group might become over time" (Zelizer 227). In the same vein, the film pieces together images of marches for civil rights and unites them with the causes of contemporary gay rights struggles. For instance, Rustin is attacked with pejoratives for his sexuality during a discussion of his battle with Black Power separatists. The film voices the words of Black Arts poet Amiri Baraka proclaiming "Bayard when you denounce us nationalists for teaching hate based on your white folks analysis you are actually functioning as the big gun of white oppression...Bayard you are a slave ship profiteer, a paid pervert for the racist unions and I feel it necessary to expose you" (qtd. in Kates et al.). These words are illustrated with an archival photograph of an African American man standing next to Rustin at a protest rally with the words "Fag Bayard!" written on a held up sign. The depiction of Rustin as a victim of homophobia rings throughout the film and helps create a prominent sense of identification with Rustin to a gay rights audience.

Conversely, the film attempts to create a sense of identification for African American audiences to gay rights causes using appropriation of the March on Washington. As the film reaches its peroration, the Negro spiritual "Oh Freedom" begins to play, while the black and white image of Rustin marching for racial equality dissolves into a photo of a march for LGBTQ equality in full color. Rainbow flags appear with the words "justice" and "fight AIDS." The clip

follows a similar arrangement of the edited collection of the 1963 March on Washington, and as the spiritual reaches the lyric “and before I’ll be a slave” the footage dissolves to reveal a banner announcing the “National March on Washington for Gay and Lesbian Rights”. The arrangement and juxtaposition at work in this footage seems to appropriate the ethos of the 1963 march as well as to establish a collective memory that constitutes the two movements as not only similar, but simultaneous.

The collective connections between the social movements are further confirmed through footage of Rustin stating “25, 30 years ago the barometer of human rights in the United States were black people. That is no longer true. The barometer for judging the character of people in regard to human rights is now those who consider themselves gay, homosexual or lesbian.” As Rustin finishes this statement the film flashes back to a quick montage of U.S. Civil Rights memory featuring video footage of the Montgomery bus boycott and the March on Washington followed by a quick cut to a 1980s Rustin exclaiming “we are all one, if we don’t know it yet we will learn it the hard way” (qtd. in Kates et al.). Rustin’s words epitomize the film’s employment of collective memory in that he establishes the struggle for racial progress on a continuum that requires acknowledgment of LGBTQ rights. Recall that Zelizer’s work on collective memory asserts that “we are unable to predict the instances in which memory takes on new transformations” (221). As such *Brother Outsider* transforms the memory of the civil rights movement to create cohesion with gay rights social progress. Further, social movement scholar Fredrick Harris theorizes the process in which events evolve into collective memories that are incorporated into a social movement’s repertoire (Harris 21). The significant component to this process involves appropriation in which events publicly re-surface as political actors re-appropriate it to build lines of solidarity for collective action (Harris 38). In positioning images

of gay rights activism within the field of U.S. Civil Rights memory, *Brother Outsider*, argues that the appropriation of Rustin's memory can serve as a bridge uniting the struggles of each group for the mutual success of the other.

Bayard Rustin Curriculum

Though the memory of Rustin is successfully revived and resuscitated through the film *Brother Outsider*, its depictions of heteronormative functions of trauma and silence retain the ability to reify this structure through the film's performance. The film fails to adequately critique the intersectional or overlapping racist and homophobic structures at work within Rustin's memory and privileges the voices that constrain rather than liberate. While this may be the case with *Brother Outsider*, there is a resistive polysemic reading to Rustin's memory that is preformed through the film's discussion and curriculum guides. Building upon rhetorician Michael Calvin McGee's conceptions that a discourse, such as those circulating through and around Rustin's memory, is never finished but is in fact "a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourse from which it is made" (McGee, 279). In terms of polysemy, rhetorician Leah Ceccarelli defines it as "the existence of plural, but finite, denotational meanings for a single text" (Ceccarelli, 409). Dunn adds that a polysemic reading "is one which uncovers a subordinate or secondary reading" of an established text ("Great Fag" 439). In addition, Black's study of the memories of the Alabama Creek War indicate, "the practice of reading resistive codes into emblematically dominant texts speaks to the complexities of collective memories" (206). Similar to Black, I derive a resistive reading of Rustin's memory in *Brother Outsider* from educational curricula and discussion guides designed to coincide with the viewing of the film. Both the discussion and curriculum guides are produced by the organization Youth in Motion, which offers free LGBTQ themed movies to student clubs and teachers in middle and high

schools throughout California, and the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, a youth organization that empowers youth activists to fight homophobia through gay-straight alliance clubs. The curriculum guide was comprised using critical pedagogue David Donahue's "Curriculum and Instruction for Secondary Teachers" course at Mills College in Oakland, California. Donahue's course requires future educators to expand their curriculum to explore historical silences on LGBTQ issues and the ways in which this impacts LGBTQ students (qtd. in Kornstein "Curriculum" 4). I argue that these guides provide a resistive reading of Rustin's memory that situates public discussion of queer memory, positions Rustin's intersectional identity, and ruptures U.S. Civil Rights Memory through a unification of U.S. Civil Rights and gay rights memory.

Queer Memory

Initially *Brother Outsider's* discussion guides create a resistive reading of the film's theme of erasure. The discourse begins by recycling the quotation from Congresswoman Holmes Norton featured in the film, speculating why Rustin remained in the background. Following this quotation the guide speculates "how did individuals' beliefs and social conditions like racism and homophobia, affect the way Rustin was treated? When were decisions that left Rustin in the background made based on intolerance and when were they made out of a sense of political strategy?" (Kornstien "Curriculum"15). By questioning the motives and intentions of queer erasure the discussion guide allows for Rustin's memory to garner a renewed sense of agency. The curriculum manages to make the heteronormative social structures that severed and silenced Rustin visible for a contemporary audience. In making them visible Rustin's public memory provides an access point for contemporary audiences to understand what we've lost from the past.

Further, the curriculum guide deals with the erasure of LGBTQ members from prominent places in history. The guide performs this through a series of questions that asks, “What counts as history, who decides how history is told, whose voices are heard?” (Kornstein “Curriculum”16). This question paired in conjunction with a film on the history of Rustin troubles the historical silence attributed to most LGBTQ figures. In asking, “What other historical moments, movements, or stories have been told without LGBT voices” the guide attempts to create a resistive reading of the film that troubles the traditional heteronormative erasure of LGBTQ discourse (Kornstien “Curriculum”16). The curriculum guide troubles the ways in which Rustin has been hidden from history by asking “In what ways did Rustin’s various identities – black, gay, Quaker, pacifist, labor organizer, affect the way he was labeled and treated? ”(Kornstien “Curriculum”16). In juxtaposing questions of how Rustin’s identity impacted his treatment with questions of what stories have been told without LGBTQ voices, the guide exemplifies how Rustin’s memory serves as a site of recognition of silence and erasure. The guide provides an opportunity for students to not only recognize this deletion, but also exemplify potential sites of resistance to queer deletion.

The curricula of *Brother Outsider* further explore the memory of Rustin as a relationship between queer voices and homophobia through the battles with Strom Thurmond. After viewing the film, the guide suggests that audiences ask, “Did Thurmond’s characterization of Rustin as a sexual pervert reflect the views that most people-including participants in the civil rights movement-had of homosexuality at the time?” (Kornstien “Curriculum” 18). The articulation of this argument by the film is further elucidated in the curriculum guide which asks viewers to consider if “Rustin’s relative openness about being gay make him more of a target than if he had remained closeted” (Kornstien “Curriculum”Guide, 19). The film’s accompanying discussion

guide for Gay Straight Alliances also contextualizes Rustin's memory through queer erasure. The discourse of the guide establishes Rustin's prominence as "the organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, one of the largest nonviolent protests ever held in the U.S." (Kornstien "Discussion", 4). Despite these achievements, the guides articulate the various heteronormative constraints in which "Rustin was silenced, threatened, arrested, beaten, imprisoned, and fired from important leadership positions, largely because he was an openly gay man in a fiercely homophobic era" (Kornstien "Discussion", 4). This text speaks to the heart of queer memory projects by allowing the film to generate open discussion on the various forms of erasure, silence and trauma experienced by historical LGBTQ figures. Rustin provides a pivotal and perfect opportunity to reflect on the ways in which LGBTQ people across the world have been silenced both figuratively through history and literally through queer bashings and hate crimes. The preceding discussion questions connect Rustin with these broader queer concerns and positions his memory as a microcosm of this battle from start to finish. Rustin's memory, then, transforms a sight of potential victimage into one of resistance for subaltern figures.

Intersectional Identity

While the film articulates Rustin's memory in an LGBTQ context, the curricula complicates the temptation to remember Rustin as a singular identity instead situating him through intersectionality. The discussion guide argues that the film can function as an intersectional space through its focus on principles of overlapping forms of identity that create constraints for individuals. "Rustin stands at the confluence of the great struggles for civil, legal, and human rights by African-Americans and lesbian and gay Americans" (Kornstien "Discussion" 4). The film situates a discussion of intersectionality using the frames of Insider/Outsider and asks, "how does one's identity shape his or her actions?" (Kornstien

“Curriculum” 13). This statement carries significant meaning for an audience of middle and high school students as they use Rustin to educate the social construction of identity. In addition, the guide suggests after viewing the film for students to discuss, “Why are people pressured to highlight certain aspects of their identity and to hide or downplay other parts? What effect does this have on individuals on society” (Kornstien “Curriculum” 13). The film encourages students to think on a time in which they felt they were outsiders and asks them “what was it like to cross a border from insider to outsider? Was it freeing? Frightening?” thus articulating forms of intersectionality by locating the discussion in terms of borders (Kornstien “Curriculum”, 13). One can only imagine the significance of this to create a common space for the questioning LGBTQ student to feel a sense of unification with other forms of social identity. The middle and high school aged students are given a worksheet to complete while watching the film in which they are to list three examples of Rustin being treated as an outsider or as in insider while noting who is treating him that way, and the consequences of this treatment. This exercise highlights the material consequences of intersectionality, allowing Rustin’s memory to serve as a contextual framework for larger discussions on difference and its impacts on identity (Kornstien “Curriculum”, 30). In this sense Rustin’s public memory offers a space for LGBT students and LGBT students of color to truly see their lived experiences reflected in a prominent figure for social justice.

Rustin’s intersectional identities are also displayed through suggested activities that explore the overlapping and interconnected roles of identity. The action guide questions “what makes you a whole person” while granting that “Rustin’s many identities-among them black, gay, Quaker, pacifist, and labor organizer-helped shape him into an incredible leader but also made him a target at different times by different people” (Kornstein “Discussion” 10). Similarly,

participants are asked to contemplate who they are and the various ways identities intersect and fit together. To illustrate participants are asked to pick five of their identities and write each on either a popsicle stick or pipe cleaners, and then they are told to put these together using tape or glue. Once this structure is built the guide asks participants to do the following:

Tell participants they can no longer be one of their identities and ask them to remove one stick from the structure. Continue asking them to remove sticks until there is just one stick left. Eventually the structures will collapse. Facilitate a conversation ...How did you feel taking a piece of your structure away? Are there times you've felt you've had to hide, take away, or prioritize a piece of your identity? How did that feel? What might Bayard's structure have looked like at different times of his life? (Kornstein "Discussion" 10).

The metaphor of identities operating as supportive beams to create a whole structure is a palpable way to invigorate a resistive memory as a figure of intersectionality. Rather than allow the film's construction of the ways in which his identities punished him, the curricula creates a counter memory that requires acknowledgements of Rustin's various subject positions as the key to his success as a leader. Rustin's memory, as circulated through the Youth in Motion curricula, adheres to rhetorical scholar Julie Thompson's suggestion to speak "to the multiplicity of voices and complexity of human life, for the speaking subject is never simply gay *or* black *or* working class" (Thompson 128). Thompson requires that projects that deal with the disruption of historical silences, such as Rustin's, occupy "multiple position in the social and cultural hierarchies that inform the everyday experience" (128). Likewise, the curriculum guide for *Brother Outsider* forces Rustin's memory to expand to become a site for intersectional representation through the ways in which, as a speaking subject, he becomes whole by looking to how disparate identities weave and intersect with each other to become a whole person.

Further enhancing this concept, the guide allows viewers to compare the film with an excerpt from Audre Lorde's essay "Sister Outsider," wherein she notes "as a black lesbian

feminist comfortable with many ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. But this is a destructive and fragmented way to live” (Kornstien “Curriculum” 31). The juxtaposition of Rustin, a gay black man, and Lorde, a black lesbian feminist, is intended to attach Rustin’s memory to the concepts of intersectionality and the damaging effects of identity politics that constrain those situated on the boundaries. The guide suggests that students examine Lorde’s work and discuss “What connection does Lorde see between living openly and being effective in bringing about social change? What aspects of Rustin’s story relate to this point?” (Kornstien “Curriculum” 14). By joining Rustin’s memory with other intersectional figures, the film’s curricula provides a space to develop collaborations and coalitions using intersectionality as a bridge to unite. The guide causes the audience to question “how are LGBTQ people affected by issues that may not be seen as specifically related to LGBTQ equality like immigration, poverty, or the environment,” allowing Rustin’s memory to move beyond the service of identity politics. (Kornstien “Discussion” 10).

Collective Memory

The curriculum of *Brother Outsider* also allows Rustin’s memory to trouble and resist dominant U.S. Civil Rights collective memory. The rupture of U.S. Civil Rights memory is constructed as students before the film are asked to describe what images they associate with the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and what events they can picture clearly in their mind. According to the guide, a discussion should result in which students question why so many of the images are the same. The guide poses the following dialectic “Why do you think Dr. King is remembered as the most prominent speaker to appear at the March on Washington?” then, ruptures the students

images by posing the question “After viewing the film what new images did you see that gave you a different perspective on these iconic moments in history? Did you look at any photos differently knowing more about who was included or not included” (Kornstien “Curriculum” 16). Another exercise asks students to create a timeline based on their own understanding of the civil rights movement. Students are asked, “Which events were you familiar with? How did you know about these events? Which events were new to you? Why do you think you haven’t heard about this?” as well as questioning, “Why do you think some events of civil rights movement are unknown while others became iconic?” (Kornstien “Curriculum” 16). By establishing a timeline of civil rights narratives the exercise functions to diffuse the elements of emplotment discussed by U.S. Civil Rights scholar Christopher Metress. Recall that emplotment functions through the suppression and subordination of some events and the highlighting of others (Metress 140). However, through a series of 8 actions attributed to Rustin, the curricula is able to resist the narrative of emplotment while adhering to Metress’ call to “make civil rights harder” through the creation of complicated narratives that open up new spaces of U.S. Civil Rights memory (140).

Finally, the curriculum and discussion guides produce a collective memory that unites the framework of two social movements. Indeed, the background information of the discussion guide functions to iterate the collective memory that unites LGBTQ movements and U.S. Civil Rights discourse stating, “Rustin’s biography is particularly important for LGBT American highlighting the major contributions of a gay man to ending official segregation in America.” (Kornstien “Discussion” 4) In one activity students are asked to examine six pieces of Rustin’s discourse related to nonviolence and equality and asked to “consider the most significant idea addressed in the piece.” Students are then asked to consider Rustin’s underlying beliefs and how those beliefs helped shape the civil rights movements. What is significant about this exercise is

that it involves Rustin's speeches on Jim Crow, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, and his speeches on gay rights including "From Montgomery to Stonewall." Thus, the activity illumines a form of collective memory in which both social movements are articulated as unified while placing Rustin's memory as the connecting piece. Rustin's memory encourages those who interact with it to inquire, "What are some of the most striking similarities between the African American civil rights movement and the modern LGBT equality movement? The differences?" (Kornstien "Discussion" 8). The curriculum guide also punctuates the connection of gay rights and civil rights using the film's clip of Rustin giving his except on the barometer for human rights from the speech "From Montgomery to Stonewall" and asks "In what ways are members of the LGBT community still fighting for full equal rights? How do you think history will remember the current struggle for LGBT rights?" (19). The film, and its resistive reading, utilize collective memory to argue that the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and Gay Rights Movement exist on the same continuum for social change and fighting for the same things. My point is not to agree with this statement, but to merely argue that the memory of Rustin is appropriated to serve as a bridge between these two social movements.

Conclusion

Through the film *Brother Outsider* as well as the curriculum and discussion guides, public memories of Rustin create a site of intersectional memory of race and sexuality through its queering of Rustin's public memory, intersectional identity, and the troubling of U.S. Civil Rights collective memory. The convergence of these various rhetorical and theoretical frameworks offers up implications for queer memory as a site of subaltern resistance and counter memory.

Dunn's scholarship encourages that inquiries into queer public memory provide opportunity to "disrupt the forgetting and erasure that has contributed to LGBT marginalization" ("Great Fag" 437). The rhetorical implications for Rustin's memory provides a similar sentiment in which the articulation and recuperation of sites of LGBTQ activism in the past opens up potential for the future. Yet if public memory functions as argument and "through framing the past we serve a present need," then a study of Rustin implores a need for public memory to be intersectional (Dunn "Great Fag" 439). While scholars have incited a queer turn in rhetorical scholarship, cases like Rustin require that public address must also embrace a turn towards intersectional identities. Rhetorical theories must begin to reflect the identities of its rhetors. Indeed, countermemory "evokes multiple forms of counter publicity that clash, not just with official forms of public discourse but with simultaneous alternate counterpublic discourse" (Dunn "Great Fag" 440). Analysis of Rustin's memory echoes this clash, and implores countermemory to become intersectional, using overlapping frameworks of identity that connect and intersect with one another. Remembering rhetorical figures such as Rustin liberates not only a historical voice, but also our singular conceptions of identity. Rustin proves a potent figure indeed.

In addition, the frequent connections and collective constructions of Rustin's identity as a source of unity and coalition implore rhetorical scholarship to continue to study the memory of intersectional figures. Yet, connecting one social movement to another must also begin to incorporate the element of difference at work within intersectional theories. Rustin cannot become a rhetorical relic that allows LGBTQ movements to connect to the dominant ethos of a previous era. Rustin's memory cannot become a form of nostalgia for a simpler social movement. He must stand firm in his own stead as a man who stood the ground of interlocking

oppression and continued to advocate for the belief in a singular human family. Further Rustin's public memory infects rhetorical scholarship with the idea that public memory is not permanent in interpretation or function. Memory slips and slides across the ideological scale and through multiple iterations to become a tool for invention rather than a fixed point of study. As such, rhetoricians must continue to examine memory in all its iterations to ensure that the next generation's Rustin has little trouble being remembered.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Bayard Rustin would have turned 100 years old on March 17, 2012. The centennial of Rustin's birth marked an explosion of public remembrances of the human rights activist. The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC), a civil rights organization dedicated to empowering Black, Lesbian, and Gay, Bisexual, and transgender people, spearheaded the effort to celebrate Rustin's Centennial and devised a campaign to ensure that his memory remains part of the public lexicon. Mandy Carter, a social justice activist and a founding member of the NBJC, helped organize a series of events deemed "The Bayard Rustin Centennial Project" which sought to "bring greater visibility to the invaluable legacy of Bayard Rustin. We recognize and value that our mission mirrors his life's work – to eradicate racism and homophobia" (NBJC). Following suit, the cover of the *Huffington Post* website that day featured a picture of Rustin and an article by historian and biographer John D'Emilio ("Honoring America's Lost Prophet"). *The Chronicle of Higher Education* commemorated the day with the promotion of a newly published collection of Rustin's letters, as well as the use of Rustin as a figure to discuss the merits of affirmative action policies (Kahlenberg 1). The Human Rights Campaign, the largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Americans, commemorated the centennial by authoring a piece in the *Huffington Post* which remembered Rustin. The outpouring of these nodes of Rustin's memory supports the conclusions and implications I suggest are imperative to a study of intersectional memory.

Throughout this study I have argued that Rustin's memory functions as a rhetorical nexus of public memory, sexuality, queer history and intersectional discourse making it worthy of analysis. This chapter follows, first, with a review of the study's arguments and findings within each chapter. Next, there is a reprise of the research questions to offer implications for the connection of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement to LGBTQ rights, intersectional identity, and queer public memory. Then, I will outline the limitations of this study and provide direction for future research. Finally, I conclude the project with a case study punctuating the merits of official proclamations harkening to Rustin's memory.

Results of Study

The purpose of this study has been to engage the rhetoric and memory of Rustin to explore the rhetorical strategies available to a gay civil rights leader and how these strategies affect the legacy of the U.S Civil Rights Movement, the future of gay rights, and discourse at the intersection of race and sexuality. Throughout this study, I built upon a grounded construct of theoretical frameworks connecting public memory, queer public address, and intersectionality to develop a rhetorical lens with which to understand Rustin's discourse. To conclude, I will briefly summarize the findings of each chapter before arriving at some critical implications.

Initially, Chapter Two proposed that Rustin's identities and his contemporary memory spaces must be seen through an intersecting methodology rather than through isolated lenses. Using this apparatus, critics can discern how Rustin's memory implicates, and is impacted by, the simultaneous discourse of race and sexuality. Rustin suffered from overlapping systems of heteronormative and racial oppression. Given this, in employing K. Crenshaw's original intersectionality thesis, I positioned a framework for analyzing intersectional rhetoric combining

the work of C. Crenshaw and Enck-Wanzer with the scholarship of queer public address advanced by Morris, Castiglia, and Cloud.

Likewise, Chapter Three positioned Rustin's rhetorical situation through exploring the context of his sexual identity. Rustin's sexuality fluctuated throughout his context as an open secret, before becoming a public point of contestation and a spear pointed at the moral efficacy of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. As such, studies of rhetorical figures such as Rustin offer rhetorical critics opportunities to explore heteronormative functions in rhetorical theory as unique forms of constraint. Moreover, Rustin's sexual identity was even more confronted due to his racial identity and his relationships with white men such as Davis Platt. This convergence of sexual and racial oppressions offers insight into the potentials of intersectionality to explain rhetorical discourse, as Rustin's rhetorical situation cannot separate his racial and sexual identities.

Chapter Four developed a grounded cluster of thematic rhetorical tactics that emerge from analyzing Rustin's discourse across temporal and situational spaces. In his essays "Nonviolence vs. Jim Crow" and "The Negro and Nonviolence" Rustin's embodiment of political intersectionality united frameworks of nonviolence and racial activism. Rustin used the tactics of transcendence, outsider status, and agitation to garner social justice and drew on his lived experience as a man of color to bring about social change. Further, through "The Meaning of Birmingham" and "From Protest to Politics" Rustin adhered to the conceptualization of structural intersectionality. Using rhetorical strategies of collective identity, consciousness, and the convergence of race and class Rustin built coalitions across identity groups of various racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Finally, Rustin's public speeches "From Montgomery to

Stonewall” and “The New Niggers are Gays” exhibited representational intersectionality to unite the history of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and contemporary gay rights discourse.

Chapter Five critiqued remembrances of Rustin as depicted through the film *Brother Outsider* and accompanying California curricula and discussion guides. Contemporary articulations of Rustin focused on divisive representations of sexuality as a private concern that was separated from his public life. Rustin’s public memory illustrated the erasure of his voice from historical and official contexts while troubling the purity of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement’s public memory. As publics remember Rustin, the master narratives of U.S. Civil Rights memory became pierced to allow layered perceptions of U.S. Civil Rights events to reflect broader and more radical appeals. Rustin’s memory depicted in film and curriculum proposed a form of intersectional counter memory in which difference is seen as a form of resisting oppression. Finally, through a reading of public discussion and curriculum guides surrounding Rustin, I argued that Rustin’s memory provided a space for rhetorical analysis to embrace intersectional rhetoric. Analysis of Rustin’s memory provides opportunities to study the rhetoric of intersectionality, and create connections to various identity groups. Given these findings, it is imperative to turn to the implications of this analysis.

This study offered a rhetorical analysis in response to questions concerning the rhetorical tactics available to Rustin, as well as the implications of invoking a gay U.S. Civil Rights leaders’ memory in the service of contemporary activism. As a result, I contend that Rustin’s rhetoric and public memory offers the field of rhetorical studies implications concerning counter memory and intersectionality. I will begin by situating the need for a counter memory uniting the discourse of African American activism and LGBTQ civil rights before turning attention to Rustin’s persona as a space for intersectional rhetorical analysis.

Counter Memory

First, analysis of Rustin's discourse implies the potential of invoking Rustin's collective memory in creating coalitional outreach from the gay community to other marginalized groups. The clash between race and sexuality within either the U.S. Civil Rights Movement or LGBTQ activism is, unfortunately, not new (B. Smith 16). Rather, the acknowledgement of gay contributions to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the legacy of African American civil rights for LGBTQ Americans remains an issue – like a persistent itch on the backs of social change, frequently bothersome, yet barely scratched on its surface. Barbara Smith, noted black feminist and cultural theorist, states that “contradictions we have been grappling with for years, namely homophobia in the in Black community, racism in the gay community, and the need for both communities to work together as allies to defeat our enemies are suddenly on people's minds” (19). Thus to bridge this divide scholarship must understand rhetorical figures who represent leadership in both communities. Analysis of Rustin's discourse reveals that one's identity does not need to be subsumed in order to reach across divides. Through over 40 years of rhetorical activism Rustin blended lessons from his various identities to bind together a common good for human rights.

Further, the increasingly visible and vocal gay liberation movement of the 1980s created a racial environment in which images of black gay men were hyper sexualized and depicted as a purely sexual object due to the stereotyped notion of the black penis (Hemphill 298). Essex Hemphill, gay activist, noted that the act of coming out of the closet had “not necessarily given white males the motivation to transcend their racist conditioning,” and vocalized the cost to the GLBT community to create “real social changes that reach beyond the issues of sexuality” (297). Studies also confirm that black gay men face greater difficulty in finding alternative sources of

acceptance and support as they are less likely than whites to be involved in the gay and lesbian community (Lewis 75). Latent racism within the gay community aside, the rhetorical and strategic lessons from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement remain an elusive tool out of reach for a group identified, not by race, but through sexual identity (Brandt 2). Events, such as the 1993 march on Washington, attempt to borrow the imagery of place and power that remains synonymous with the civil rights movement. The response to these rhetorical attempts by the black community is less than positive, with prominent members of the African American community such as Alveda King calling it “disparaging of the name of Martin Luther King, Jr.” and even going so far as to say that “to equate the homosexual community with race is to give a death sentence to civil rights” (qtd. in Brandt 6).

Likewise, opposition to gay rights has a decidedly higher prevalence within the African American community with “special scorn for the claim that the struggle of homosexuals mirrors the struggle of African Americans” (Solomon 60). Those who critique the appropriation of imagery from the U.S. Civil Rights Movement for gay rights see the move, at best, as a weakening of legitimate racial movements, and, at worse, as a framing of gay rights activists as “pretenders to a throne of disadvantage that properly belongs to black Americans (Gates 25). In a 1987 interview Rustin stated, “I think that the black community has been largely willing to accept its gay elements so long as they were not openly gay. It was later when the clubs came and gay men wanted the right to come out of the closet that the black community became quite as intolerant as the white community” (qtd. in D’Emilio *Lost Prophet* 282).

In line with this, Lewis’s study of the attitudinal differences between homosexuality and gay rights among black and white Americans finds that African Americans are 11% more likely to condemn homosexual relations as “always wrong” (63). McBride suggests that much of the

conflict arising between race and sexuality comes from the use of anti-gay discourse in the service of black masculinity. The discourse of racial liberation suggests, “at best the invisibility of homosexuality, and at worst, understands gays and lesbians as racially antagonistic” (220). Making this intersection more problematic is the attitude towards homosexuality among a few African American studies scholars. Afro-centric scholars, such as Molefi Asante, represent a nationalist reprimand of homosexuality that followed the civil rights era (Gates 29). He claimed, “homosexuality is a deviation from Afro-centric thought, because it makes the person evaluate his own physical needs above the teachings of nationalist consciousness” and offers the redemptive power of Afro-centricity as a cure through the “submergence of their own wills into the collective will of our people” (Asante qtd in Gates 29). Both sides of the racial and sexual divide share one commonality: they each fail to make reference to key individuals who fall within these two, sometimes overlapping, struggles—queer men and women of color. Therefore, Rustin’s place at the intersection of race and sexuality suggests that discriminatory constraints on both sides of racial and sexual rhetoric impact and work against the other. As noted in Chapter Four, forcing Rustin to keep his sexual identity in the closet limited the impact of his racial identity, and his racial identity constrained the manifestation of his sexual voice.

I have argued that Rustin’s frequent invocation of lessons from the U.S. Civil Rights movement connected two historically oppressed movements, creating a space for African Americans within the gay rights movement, and vice-versa. The analysis of Rustin’s discourse suggests that the potential for a counter memory connecting the social movements for African American civil rights, and rights for LGBTQ individuals. Rustin, and figures like him, share the ability to prove that the two movements are not mutually exclusive but inextricably bound together through shared history. As such it is imperative to foster and develop this shared sense

of heritage between the two movements if discourses of social change are ever to truly liberate marginalized identities. Thomas Dunn defines counter memory in terms of challenging stable notions of the past, but also dominant cultural understandings of the past (440). If the narratives of the past become acts of liberation for subaltern groups, rhetorical critics must then seek out these narratives; uncover them from the shackles of categorization that requires the silencing of complex identities. It is only then that the specters of identity politics that frame our rhetorical analysis begin to dissipate. Sexual silence within the African American community, as seen through Rustin's case study, can begin to find its historical voice, and with it the liberation of contemporary desire in African American rhetoric. Likewise, the LGBTQ can begin to understand the historically oppressive representations of whiteness that situate queer men and women of color as invisible (Han 53).

Intersectionality

This study contends that Rustin cannot be seen as merely a representation of two constituencies; and it is the place of rhetorical studies scholars to revive Rustin's discursive legacy. It is imperative to enlighten future understandings of the ways in which race and sexuality mutually liberate and constrain each other. Accordingly, rhetorical analysis of intersectionality facilitates a step forward in the creation of liberating critical discourse. Black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins argues "domination operates by seducing, pressuring, and forcing" people to choose their identity categories (*Black Feminist Thought* 22). As evidenced in the analysis of *Brother Outsider* attempts to conceptualize Rustin's discourse as solely queer, or solely African American ignores pivotal contexts of the ways in which his identities overlap. This study and its associated findings fall within rhetorician Barbara Biesecker's call for rhetoric to come to terms with difference between and among various identity constructions (157). The

memory and rhetoric of Rustin offers rhetorical critics as site of resistance to hegemony by focusing on the power of difference as opposed to assimilation.

The original theorist of intersectionality, Kimberle Crenshaw, offers a view that social power in delineating difference need not be the power of dominance; it can instead be the source of social empowerment and reconstruction (“Mapping The Margins”1242). Similarly, rhetorical theories that do not account for intersectional concepts of identity remain in danger of marginalizing those who sit on the borders of various subjectivities. As rhetorical scholar Julie Thompson affirms, “critics interested in the rhetoric of the oppressed, dispossessed, and displaced must continue to recover those voices hidden in/from history while simultaneously interrogating the cultural, social, economic, and symbolic conditions that enable speaking subjects to emerge” (31). The rhetorical strategies of Rustin, and those who seek to revive his legacy in public memory, become fitting microcosms of the convalescent constraints that bind and silence figures who do not comport easily into singular notions of identity. Hence, Rustin’s rhetoric provides encouragement for rhetorical studies to embrace more intersectional conceptualizations of identity. Rustin remains a fascinating figure whose voice was limited by more than the complex binaries of homosexual/heterosexual. Even after his death, his words continue to impact the various issues of capitalist and sexist oppression that work to stagnate the progress of human rights in the United States. Rhetoricians Lisa Flores and Dreama Moon remind us that singling out one aspect of oppressive systems produce skewed visions of liberation and domination (109). Hence, the rhetorical theories by which we come to understand Rustin, and rhetors like him, must embrace these layered and multiplicative conceptions of identity to offer new modes of criticism and analysis that better liberate non-normative publics. I suggest that intersectionality has the potential to take a shift in rhetorical studies to examine

discourse that both shape and contest intersectional audiences. This thesis expands the development of intersectionality to embrace sexuality and race as constraining and overlapping systems of oppression that function together the discourse of rhetors like Rustin.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis has explored intersectional rhetorical discourse through the rhetoric and public memory of Bayard Rustin. Despite these efforts, intersectionality requires broader theoretical development and applications to develop heuristic value for rhetorical critics. A potential future study could compare Rustin with other queer men of color, or other intersectional identities, to understand how race and sexuality inform and constrain public discourse. For instance, it might be fruitful to explore how Rustin's public activism for U.S. Civil Rights provides different rhetorical situations to that of fellow queer men of color like James Baldwin. One might explore how Rustin's privilege as a man positioned barriers to identification from the experiences of lesbian women of color such as Audre Lorde.

While this project interrogated Rustin's position within public memory through the documentary film *Brother Outsider*, future research could investigate how Rustin is positioned within U.S. Civil Rights public memory through tracing artifacts of numerous national and regional U.S. Civil Rights museums and other public U.S. Civil Rights memorials for Rustin's historical significance. Rustin's rhetorical strategies create a shared sense of history between actions of U.S. Civil Rights activists and gay rights activists through shared public action. As such, future research could engage the discourse that compares struggles for Gay Rights with that of the U.S. Civil Rights movement and the impact this comparison has on African Americans as well as queer people of color.

While this study revisits Rustin's discourse across various situational and temporal spaces, the inclusion of only six pieces of discourses offers an area of limitation. Future research can improve upon the breadth of the study through a singular focus on one specific rhetorical exigence and/or an examination of all of the accompanying discourse. Conversely, a broader study could include a wider sample of speeches that span his international activism, advocacy for the repeal of affirmative action, as well as his battles for women's rights. At the same time, the choice of rhetorical artifacts of Rustin's memory could potentially be expanded to include recent attempts to memorialize him in public discourse.

To illustrate the need to understand other forms of Rustin's memory I now turn to a case study of a series of public proclamations to encapsulate Rustin's official public memory. Throughout the unfolding of this project the contextual elements of Rustin's rhetorical situation constantly shifted as public campaigns attempted to contemporize Rustin's legacy and improve public awareness of his human rights and social change efforts. While not originally part of the parameters of this study, I believe it is important to briefly summarize these efforts and their correlating constructions of Rustin's official public memory as these texts appeared after the crafting of this project. This analysis punctuates the need for scholarship to explore other forms of intersectional memory.

Public Commemorations

The NBJC's centennial celebration involved the memory of Rustin circulated across nationally syndicated blogs and news posts, coinciding with several official acts of commemoration by local governments. The proclamations from the mayor's office of Berkeley, CA and New Orleans, LA issued on March 12, 2012, serve as a final exemplar to illustrate the fluid meaning at work in Rustin's public memory. Rhetorician Stephen Browne argues that

commemorations, such as city proclamations, are important to discursive study in that “it becomes identifiably rhetorical, thus a means to recreate symbolically a history otherwise distant and mute” (Browne, 169). Building from Browne’s conceptions, these proclamations serve as acts of official memory that reiterate a flattened U.S. Civil Rights narrative and simultaneously institutionalize the appropriation of Rustin’s memory for gay rights causes. These iterations ultimately limit the potential of Rustin as a rhetorical figure and thus must be fruitfully analyzed.

Initially, the proclamations serve as an official memory that positions Rustin within the ethos of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King Jr. For instance, the Berkeley proclamation eclipses Rustin’s fifty years of public agitation and activism to focus solely on his connection to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. The proclamation begins its commemoration through establishing the credibility of the March on Washington; it notes “Whereas The March on Washington For Jobs and Freedom is one of the largest political rallies for human rights in United States history and has been touted as the day that ensured the success of the civil rights movement, widely credited with helping to pass the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965)” (Bates). Similarly the New Orleans city council offers “Whereas Mr. Rustin’s legacy includes the 1964 Civil Rights Act, a modern symbol of human dignity and the duty of the United States government to outlaw discrimination based on status” (Clarkson). By beginning the proclamation with a statement about the March on Washington the discourse makes a move to center Rustin’s discourse in the context of events acceptable to a dominant public. And, in terms of primacy and the rhetorical canon of arrangement, the emphasis on the Civil Rights Act provides support to the articulation of Rustin as an element of dominant discourse. In connecting the March’s success with creating the Voting Rights Act, the proclamation appropriates Rustin’s memory to reify a dominant U.S. Civil Rights narrative. The

discourse suggests that the March was a tactic to promote the passage of civil rights legislation, thereby overshadowing the various economic functions the March sought to advocate. Consequentially, Rustin's memory is positioned within the confines of his work in the 1960s, thereby eliding his pursuit of economic justice and universal peace. Recall that Rustin's nonviolent commitments stretched far beyond an application to racial protest, as evidenced by his many lengthy speeches on nuclear proliferation and conscientious objection to World War II. However, in the service of the Berkeley proclamation, Rustin's attributes are comported into a larger structure of U.S. Civil Rights memory and not examined for their own merit. Browne affirms that rhetoricians locate what occurs when a commemorative practice becomes transferred from its origins in "traditions of resistance" to official culture (170). Likewise, Rustin is not remembered as an outspoken activist, a man who believed in a mass critique of social institutions; instead the proclamations signify him as a benevolent figure working to build institutional progress through legislation.

Moreover, both proclamations present Rustin in a secondary position in relation to the behemoth of U.S. Civil Rights memory: Martin Luther King Jr. In the discourse from Berkeley, Rustin is remembered as having helped "mold Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. into an international symbol of peace and nonviolence" as well as for bringing "Gandhi's nonviolent protest techniques to the American Civil Rights Movement" (Bates). The proclamation from the City of New Orleans carries a similar tone privileging his actions as a "visionary leader in America's black civil rights movement, a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr., a teacher of Gandhian nonviolence" (Clarkson). Rustin's actions are seen solely as valuable to the extent they contribute to the success of King and the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. For example, the city of Berkeley proclamation elaborates, "Whereas February 1956, when Bayard Rustin arrived in

Montgomery to assist with the nascent bus boycott, Martin Luther King Jr. had not yet personally embraced nonviolence” (Bates). The proclamations serve as an extension of public memory that “includes and excludes, rewards and punishes, promises and denies....it constructs subject positions” (Blair and Michel, 70). Accordingly, Rustin’s memory remains subjected to the shadow of King and fails to take center stage, even in his own proclamation.

The public proclamations of Rustin’s centennial also facilitate a function of collective memory that unites the U.S. Civil Rights Movement with LGBT discourse. The texts create this collective memory through retrospective nominalization, or the naming of early events in accordance with others (Zelizer 222). To illustrate, the Berkeley discourse claims “Whereas, as the saying goes, no one is free while others are oppressed, even though African American civil rights have made tremendous strides, we struggle to grant basic human rights to the LGBT community, most notably marriage equality” (Bates). At first reading this statement alludes to a collective memory that places LGBTQ rights, and specifically the right of marriage, on a continuum with the social protests for political and economic rights sought by the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. The proclamation appropriates the memory of Rustin as a discursive space that places the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and same sex marriage equality on the same scale aiming for the same purpose. However, this statement encapsulates myriad interpretations, the least of which seems to suggest that the U.S. Civil Rights Movement “cannot be free” whilst there is still a battle for LGBT rights. The discourse seems to impart a sense of belonging from U.S. Civil Rights communities to the current LGBT struggle.

In like manner, the city proclamations co-opt Rustin’s legacy to add legitimacy to modern day social movements. For instance, the New Orleans proclamation proceeds to equate the two social movements indicating, “the modern LGBT movement, via the American Equality

Bill, seeks to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, as required by the U.S. Constitution, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and human conscience” (Clarkson). While the Berkeley proclamation recognizes Rustin “for his indelible contributions to African Americans and the LGBT community” (Bates), the New Orleans proclamation extends this nominalization to proclaim March 17, 2012 to be “LGBT Civil Rights Equality Awareness Day” (Clarkson). Hence, Rustin’s memory is co-opted⁹ to become a bridge connecting the past to a contemporary struggle, rather than serving as a marker of simultaneous difference between the two groups.

While the proclamations produce a collective memory connecting U.S. Civil Rights to the LGBTQ community, the proclamations provide a problematic attempt to discuss Rustin’s intersectional identity. Initially, the proclamations instigate a memory of Rustin as an “openly gay” male (Bates). While historical evidence indicates that he did not live his life in the closet, it is important to begin to trouble the memory of his life as being able to be lived in the open. The Berkeley proclamation offers that “he was an openly-gay male, and it was feared that this would discredit the African American Civil Rights Movement [*sic*]” (Bates). This statement ignores the vital role heteronormative structures plays in requiring his sexuality to be silenced and sublimated. The official acts of Rustin’s public memory cast Rustin as a figure embodying a solidified identity of a gay speaking subject. Yet, these pieces of public memory fail to mention the years of public ridicule and demonization Rustin faced for his gay identity. By avoiding Rustin’s suffering at the hands of heteronormativity, as well as stabilizing the private nature of

⁹ Rhetorical scholars make particular distinctions between appropriation and co-optation. For the purpose of this thesis I concur with rhetorician Helene Shugart to define co-optation as an act occurring when dominant groups absorb and overtake elements from the less powerful (210). Conversely appropriation is an act by members of disenfranchised groups “to claim and utilize labels conventionally applied by their oppressors...as a way of challenging their meaning” (Shugart, 210).

sexuality, the proclamations reify the forces of oppression that continue to constrain queer discourse.

In choosing to avoid the discussion of the therapy Rustin was forced to undergo, the codes in which he was required to speak to his lover Platt, or the erasure of his accomplishments due to his sexual orientation, the proclamations create barriers to Rustin's memory to become a fully articulated path of subaltern resistance. Yet, neither the evidence of Rustin's gay identity nor his racial activism fully represents the complications and complexities of his memory. While Rustin's official public memory provides problematic articulations of his intersectional identities, these commemorations provide proof that meaning and memory are never fixed. As such, scholarly efforts must be vigilant in critiquing iterations of public memory and identity whenever and wherever they might manifest.

Conclusion

Through rhetorical analysis, I have analyzed the rhetorical strategies of Rustin and have contended that Rustin's intersectional identities created significant impacts on his public memory and its potential to serve as an act of resistance for LGBTQ and African American peoples. After uncovering the rhetorical implications and limitations of this thesis I quickly return critical attention to Senate Bill 48, or the FAIR (Fair, Accurate, Inclusive, Respectful) Education Act of California. As communities grapple with what it will mean to teach LGBTQ history, and reviving the accomplishments of LGBTQ figures to a variety of social movements, it remains to be seen if the memory of Rustin will sustain itself through another wave of progressive social change. Will his rhetorical strategies of coalitions and collaborations across all marginalized spaces endure, or will he become a poster child for singular identity politics. Will he be remembered simply as a gay man in the civil rights movement, a black man in the gay

community, or will his memory work to intersect these identities? As advocates attempt to revive his legacy and the centennial of his birth, it is up to rhetorical critics to take up our scholarly arms and defend the contributions of a man who sacrificed so much to ensure the liberation of so many. The contributions of intersectional historical figures remain a potent project for helping to ensure that society acknowledges difference in ways that empower voice instead of reify hegemony. As a powerful advocate for social change who stood gallantly on the crossroads of the great struggle for civil and human rights by African Americans and LGBTQ Americans alike, Bayard Rustin's voice is much needed today.

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