Bayard & Me
A FILM BY Matt Wolf

WWW.ITGETSBETTER.ORG/BAYARDANDME

OFFICIAL VIEWER'S GUIDE
This Viewer’s Guide was written by education staff at the It Gets Better Project, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles, California. With affiliates operating on 4 different continents, the It Gets Better Project boasts a truly global operation. Together, we use the power of story - told through online videos, social media, films (like Bayard & Me) books, and more - to inspire, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe. So far, over 60,000 It Gets Better® videos have been shared.

About It Gets Better®

Bayard Rustin was the organizer of the March on Washington and one of the leaders of the civil rights movement. In the 1980s Bayard adopted his younger boyfriend Walter Naegle to obtain the legal protections of marriage. In Bayard & Me, Walter remembers Bayard and a time when gay marriage was inconceivable. He reflects on the little known phenomena of intergenerational gay adoption and its connection to the civil rights movement. Bayard & Me won the Grand Jury Prize for Best Documentary Short at the 2017 Outfest Los Angeles.

Why Bayard & Me

The following guide will walk you through some of the film’s most important themes, asking you to think critically about the lives and stories you see. To watch the film, go to www.itgetsbetter.org/BayardAndMe.
Question 1
Who was Bayard Rustin? Describe in your own words the contributions he made to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1950/60s.

Question 2
Bayard and Walter met in New York City in 1977. Based on Walter’s description of the times, how have things changed or stayed the same for queer people in America since then?

Question 3
Bayard and Walter’s relationship was unique even by today’s standards - it was unapologetically gay, interracial, and intergenerational. What challenges do you think came with each one of those labels?

Question 4
Bayard Rustin, much like Malcolm X, traveled abroad to learn more about global activism and civil rights. How do you think their experiences helped shape the way they viewed their blackness in America?

Question 5
Compare and contrast the political fight for racial equality in America with the fight for LGBTQ equality. How are they similar? How do they differ? In what ways do they intersect?
Question 6
Before marriage equality, queer couples often went to great lengths to secure their rights and shared assets. Adopting a partner as one's own child was one such method. Describe your initial reaction to hearing about that. Why do you think you reacted that way?

Question 7
It is briefly mentioned in the film that AIDS began devastating the gay community around the time Bayard adopted Walter (early 1980s). How do you think the onset of that epidemic impacted their decision to go through with the adoption?

Question 8
Walter stated in the film that “whether the adoption went through or not, we were married.” What do you think he meant by that? Why do you think the idea of being married was so important to Bayard and Walter?

Question 9
Why do you think Bayard’s personal story and role in history are largely unknown, particularly outside LGBTQ and black communities today? What can you do to change that?

Question 10
At the end of the film, Walter emphasizes that it wasn't just he who had lost Bayard when he died, “it was a loss to the world.” Do you think Bayard's life has impacted you or the ones you care about in some way? How so?
**ADVOCATE**

Make a protest poster of your own that champions a social issue you are passionate about. Try to be especially creative, keeping Bayard Rustin’s political history in mind. Take a picture with your poster and post it to social media, and remember to tag the It Gets Better Project or use the hashtag #ItGetsBetter.

**DISCOVER**

Martin Luther King, Jr. was the leader of the Civil Rights Movement thanks, in part, to incredible people like Bayard Rustin who aided him along the way. For this activity, pick a social champion you admire from modern history and identify an unsung hero that helped them behind-the-scenes. After doing some research, write a short biography about that person’s life and achievements, and share it with someone who you think would be touched by the story.

**SHARE**

Make an It Gets Better® video that includes your personal story. Tell the world who you are, why stories about queer history (like that of Bayard and Walter) matter to you, and what message of support you’d like to share to an LGBTQ young person having a tough time. Upload the video to your YouTube channel, and submit the link to the It Gets Better Project website at www.itgetsbetter.org/SubmitVideo.