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How Finance Officers Can Shake Things Up.

Local government finance officers can employ revenue, procurement and other tactics that disrupt the status quo to finance important initiatives.

I recently watched Rustin, the biopic about nearly forgotten civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, who was the chief organizer of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. In 1948, the year of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, Rustin traveled to India to learn the techniques of nonviolent civil resistance, which he later taught to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Not long after his India trip, Rustin wrote, "We need, in every community, a group of angelic troublemakers." These words were echoed by another civil rights icon, John Lewis, who famously said, "When you see something that is not right, not fair, not just, say something. Do something. Get in trouble. Good trouble."

Local government finance officers might be the last people you would think of as troublemakers of any kind. Their job, after all, is to keep cities and counties out of trouble by ensuring that tax dollars are managed responsibly. The truth is that finance officers are people too, not human calculators. Many of them care deeply about making their communities better — in a fiscally prudent way, of course.

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OPINION | June 6, 2024 • Andrew Kleine

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