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Pearl S. Buck International Honors 2019 Woman of Influence Nydia Han At Sold-Out Award Dinner

Pearl S. Buck International celebrated the 2019 Woman of Influence, Nydia Han, in front of a sold-out crowd at a dinner and reception Thursday, April 25, 2019 at the Pearl S. Buck estate in Hilltown, PA. Ms. Han is 6abc's award-winning investigative journalist and news anchor and the activist creator of the documentary #ThisIsAmerica, which shares unique American stories and encourages the audience to be positive agents of change and unity in the community. The more than 250 in attendance at this elegant charitable event included community members and leaders, local dignitaries, and friends and family of Ms. Han and Pearl S. Buck International.

Originally established in 1978 as the Woman of the Year Award, the Woman of Influence Award honors women, who like Pearl Buck, have distinguished themselves in their career, devotion to family and pursuit of humanitarian goals.

Together with CEO of Covenant Bank, John Spier, Pearl S. Buck International President & CEO Janet Mintzer presented Ms. Han with the Woman of Influence award. Ms. Han gave a moving and powerful talk about the ability of labels to stop—or start—intercultural dialogue and exchanges.

Ms. Han noted, "I liken a label-maker to a gun—one fires words, the other fires bullets. But depending on how we use them, they are equally divisive, damaging and destructive. Throughout our history people have used labels to divide, dehumanize and to construct a human hierarchy." Pearl S. Buck fought against it, "yet despite all of Pearl Buck's efforts and the efforts of so many others, we have not moved away from this dangerous practice of labeling."

In her speech, Ms. Han admitted to labeling the woman who almost ran her over and shouted at her, “This is America!”, sparking Ms. Han’s viral Facebook video that led to the creation of her #ThisIsAmerica documentary. “I labeled her racist, ignorant, and stupid,” but a friend asked her if the rage was blinding her to any other perspective. She further told Ms. Han, “if you care about reaching people who have a different point of view, you must be open to the idea that this is not a binary issue of being right or wrong.”

In #ThisIsAmerica, Ms. Han visited with people who had commented on her social media post (many of whom had disagreed with her anger) and she was surprised to find there were things they had in common with each other. Her conversations with them “profoundly changed me,” she noted. “I see when we label carelessly and quickly, we kill conversations before they can even begin. But the possibilities for connection are limitless when we pause and consider what else might be true. Pearl Buck said, ‘I learned early to understand that there’s no such condition in human affairs as absolute truth. There is only truth as people see it, and even in fact might be kaleidoscopic in their variety.’ So, these are the labels I choose for myself today—woman, American, Asian-American, Korean-American, daughter of immigrants, friend, wife and mom, journalist, storyteller, truth-seeker, and optimist. As I look at my labels, I find myself thinking about the driver who sparked this entire investigation. I see now, we share a lot of labels, too. At the minimum, woman and friend, perhaps wife and mom, and I’m pretty sure, American ... Through my own #ThisIsAmerica journey, I have learned when we take the film off our own lens it becomes clear we are all just fellow human beings.”

She continued, “All I know is dropping my label-maker took a lot of weight off of me and gave me the freedom to understand both sides of the conversation. We don’t have to agree on everything—realistically, we never will. But just because we disagree about one thing doesn’t mean we have to disagree about everything. And when we build trust and empathy, we discover the ways we are alike, and open up a space to dialogue about our differences. Pearl Buck believed in the common goodness of mankind so much so that she said, ‘I feel no need for any other faith than my faith in human beings.’ I have that faith, too. So, while I am undeserving of this recognition tonight, I accept it with a pledge and a promise to use it as an opportunity to encourage and inspire activism in the name of the incomparable Pearl Buck.”

Proceeds from this inspirational event support the important intercultural, humanitarian, and preservation work of Pearl S. Buck International, which carries out Pearl S. Buck’s legacy of bridging cultures and changing lives.

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Pearl S. Buck International® provides opportunities to explore and appreciate other cultures, builds better lives for children around the globe and promotes the legacy of our founder by preserving and interpreting her National Historic Landmark Home.

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