



Pearl S. Buck International Woman of Influence Honorees 1979–2020



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1979

Beverly Sills

Beverly Sills was known around the world for her operatic talent. For years she thrilled audiences with her beautiful voice and stage presence at the Metropolitan Opera, the New York City Opera, the Vienna State Opera, and Covent Garden in London. As National Chair of the March of Dimes' Mothers' March on Birth Defects, Ms. Sills helped to raise over \$70 million in 10 years. She often met personally with parents of children born with birth-defects and visited the children in hospitals. Ms. Sills' interest and devotion to the cause of eradicating birth defects stemmed from the disabilities of her children, Muffy and Peter. At age two, Muffy was diagnosed as suffering from severe hearing loss. Several months later, Peter was diagnosed as developmentally disabled. After learning about the challenges facing both her children, Ms. Sills left the stage to personally see to their care.

1980

Lois Burpee

Lois Burpee, the daughter of a Scottish missionary, spent her formative years in the Middle East and China. After returning to the United States she retained close ties with missionaries and others working in those regions. With her husband, she maintained frequent correspondence with them. Mr. and Mrs. Burpee's philanthropic interests included aid to underdeveloped countries, the first Chinese/American Horticultural Conference (held in Philadelphia in 1945), and the endowment of an academic chair at Bucknell University in genetics and research. Mrs. Burpee and her husband, David Burpee, strongly supported the Welcome House® adoption program.

1981

Erma Bombeck

Erma Bombeck was a high-achiever. She was a mother of three, a widely read syndicated columnist, a twice-a-week commentator on *Good Morning America* (from 1975–1986), and the recipient of 16 honorary degrees. Despite her professional success, Ms. Bombeck remained committed to her family and to all children. She was especially dedicated to helping children survive cancer. Her best seller, *I Want to Grow Hair, I Want to Grow Up, I Want to Go to Boise*, was written to benefit children with cancer.

1982

Sister Carmela Cristiano

Sister Carmela M. Cristiano was an active New Jersey resident who excelled in her efforts to improve orphanages and the lives of children in need. Sister Carmela was an active supporter of Pearl S. Buck's legacy of bringing hope to children worldwide.

1983

Pearl Bailey

Starting as a young girl, Pearl Bailey sang, performed, entertained, innovated, and captivated audiences throughout the world. She performed in night clubs, on Broadway, in movies, and on television. As magnificent as she was as an entertainer, Pearl Bailey's personal commitment to helping others was even greater. She was the US Goodwill Ambassador to the United Nations. Ms. Bailey worked with Barbara Bush on her nationwide literacy campaign and spoke to young people throughout the nation about commitment and contribution. She worked extensively for child abuse prevention and family cohesiveness.

1984

Lisa Richette

The Honorable Lisa Richette was an outstanding judge in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. While serving on the bench in Family Court she received the Woman of the Year Award for her crusade against violence toward children. Judge Richette was the author of *Throw Away Children*, which she wrote to bring attention to the youngest victims in society.

1985

Helen Hayes

Helen Hayes' humility was as much a part of her legacy as her theater work. Her career soared with the 1935 stage drama, *Victoria Regina*, in which she portrayed Queen Victoria from girlhood to widowhood. Ms. Hayes won three Tony Awards, two Oscars, and one Emmy. Her daughter, an aspiring actress, died of polio at the age of 19, prompting Ms. Hayes to establish the Mary MacArthur Fund with the March of Dimes to aid other children with the disease and their families.

1987

Selma Burke

Dr. Selma Hortense Burke was one of the most honored sculptors of her time. She is best known for her portrait of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which is on the US dime. Dr. Burke was honored as the Woman of the Year because of her professional excellence, devotion to family, community service, and advocacy for human rights.

1988

Carol Arthur DeLuise

Carol Arthur DeLuise received her first big acting break with the national tour of *Once Upon a Mattress* and became a star on Broadway and television. Nevertheless, Carol made her family a priority. Married to comedian Dom DeLuise, Carol was determined to take an active role in the lives of her three sons. The couple were active supporters of Pearl S. Buck International. In addition to creating radio and TV public service announcements, they served as spokespersons for the organization.

1988

Jean Stapleton

Jean Stapleton began her performing career as a member of the Robert Shaw Chorale. She made her professional stage debut in 1941 and enjoyed remarkable success on Broadway. When Norman Lear began assembling the cast for his television sitcom *All in the Family*, he immediately thought of Ms. Stapleton for the role of the kind-hearted Bronx housewife, Edith Bunker. In addition to her stellar acting career, Ms. Stapleton was an original member of the Board of Directors of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation. She appeared in documentaries for the organization, sponsored children, and advocated for our mission of bringing hope to children worldwide.

1989

Rosalee Sinn

Rosalee Sinn is active with Heifer Project International. This nonprofit organization offers hungry families around the world a way to feed themselves and become self-reliant. She is a strong supporter of social justice and believes in supplying the basic needs required to prevent families and children from becoming undernourished.

1990

Sally Jessy Raphael

In 1982, Sally Jessy Raphael became the first woman TV talk show host. Once seen in almost 180 markets nationwide and in several countries throughout the world, the *Sally Jessy Raphael* show, was the second most popular American talk show and one of the most popular internationally. Ms. Raphael continues to support Pearl S. Buck International, UNICEF, The Falling Star Foundation for Pediatric AIDS, AMFAR, the Children's Cancer Foundation, and more.

1991

Sharon Rockefeller

Sharon Percy Rockefeller has served the public broadcasting community for more than 30 years as a leader and policy maker. In 1989, she became President and CEO of WETA, Washington, DC's flagship public television and radio stations, and continues to guide WETA to outstanding accomplishments in broadcasting and production. In West Virginia, Mrs. Rockefeller acted as Chairman and Founder of Mountain Artisans (a quilting business for low-income artisans), served as a member of the board of directors of the Sunrise Museum, and was a teacher's assistant for the Head Start program in Coal Branch Heights.

1992

Audrey Meadows Six

Born in Wu Chang, China to missionary parents, Audrey Meadows spoke nothing but Chinese until she came to the United States with her family. She had planned to study for a career in journalism until her sister Jayne persuaded her to try show business. Her television work included *The Honeymooners* and straight dramatic acting in every major television playhouse production. Later in life, Audrey left show business behind. She served as the first woman director of the First National Bank of Denver and as Honorary Vice President of Sales for Continental Airlines. She worked tirelessly with UNICEF to improve the lives of children in developing countries.

1993

Audrey Hepburn

Audrey Hepburn boasted a colorful motion picture career that included *Sabrina*, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, and *War and Peace*. She was nominated for a total of five Academy Awards and won the Best Actress Oscar for her role in *Roman Holiday*. In 1988, Ms. Hepburn was invited to become a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF. She traveled from Ethiopia to Thailand, bringing attention to the plight of the world's starving children. In 1992, President George H. W. Bush presented her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom for her work. Ms. Hepburn concentrated on her charitable works for UNICEF until the end of her life.

1994

Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for *Beloved* and in 1993 was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. She was appointed Goheen Professor in the Council of the Humanities at Princeton University in 1989. Ms. Morrison and Pearl S. Buck were the first women to win both awards. Ms. Morrison is well known for her humanitarian activism, especially in defense of minority children's rights. She is a member of Africa Watch and the Helsinki Watch Committee on Human Rights.

1995

Corazon Aquino

The Honorable Corazon C. Aquino was President of the Republic of the Philippines from 1986 to 1992. She symbolized the power of an active, non-violent struggle in realizing the difficult transition from authoritarianism to democracy. As President, Mrs. Aquino willingly shared power and put into place a system of checks and balances for executive power. She fulfilled the single six-year term allowed her by the new constitution. Mrs. Aquino went on to chair the Benigno S. Aquino Jr. Foundation, which provided scholarships for education and helped improve the quality of life for Filipinos.

1996

Hanan Ashrawi

As the former spokesperson for Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi helped broker the famed Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles that led to the creation of an independent Palestinian entry in Gaza and the West Bank. Founder of the Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights, Dr. Ashrawi served as a member of the Palestinian Council and was an English professor at Birzeit University. In 1995, she published her memoirs, *This Side of Peace: A Personal Account*.

1997

Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi was the leader of Burma's democratic movement. Her political party, the National League for Democracy, was elected democratically in 1989, but prevented from taking office. In 1991, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, which she was unable to accept in person. From 2009 through 2010 Suu Kyi was kept under either full house arrest or restricted access. Since 2016, she has served as the Foreign Minister and State Counsellor of Burma.

1998

Sheryl Lee Ralph

Sheryl Lee Ralph achieved critical acclaim in many areas of the entertainment business. In 1985, she founded the Los Angeles Children's Toy Drive with Denzel Washington and his wife, Pauletta, to provide toys, books and clothing to children living in L.A.'s housing projects. She also produced *Divas: Simply Singing*, a staged evening of song and entertainment that became one of the biggest AIDS fundraisers in Hollywood.

1999

Hillary Clinton

Hillary Rodham Clinton became First Lady of the United States in 1993. Her deep commitment to children led Mrs. Clinton to champion efforts to increase immunizations for preschool-age children, push for an expansion for children's health insurance coverage, advocate for innovative prenatal care, and raise awareness of the impact of tobacco on children. Ms. Clinton served as a US Senator from New York (2001–2009), US Secretary of State (2009–2013), and ran for President in 2016.

2000

Lee Hee-Ho

Lee Hee-Ho became the First Lady of the Republic of Korea in 1997. Mrs. Lee has a strong history of social activism on behalf of women and children, especially in her home country. She worked with a number of minority welfare organizations and continues her tireless work for women and children.

2001

Janice Walsh

Janice Comfort Walsh was adopted in 1925 at the age of three months by Pearl S. Buck and Lossing Buck. Ms. Walsh spent her early years in China and Japan. She and her mother returned to the United States in 1934. In 1935 Pearl S. Buck married Richard J. Walsh. The family settled at Green Hills Farm in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, which became a National Historic Landmark in 1980. The international headquarters of Pearl S. Buck International is located on this site.

2002

Amelia Juico Gordon

Amelia Juico Gordon was the former Mayor and Assemblywoman of Olongapo City in the Philippines. She legally adopted 54 children and changed the lives of thousands more as the founder of the Boys Town and Girls Home, which provided shelter and opportunity for orphaned Filipino children of American descent in Olongapo City. She was a selfless, dedicated champion for the underprivileged and vulnerable sectors of society. Her untiring demonstration of love and compassion for abandoned children as well as victims of violence, oppression, and other forms of socio-economic deprivations was remarkable.

2006

Laura Bush

Laura Bush served as First Lady of the United States from 2001–2009. She has made many contributions in the areas of humanitarian outreach and cross-cultural understanding. Mrs. Bush worked on behalf of public/private partnerships between the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Project Hope, and other private health care organizations that help equip and train pediatric health care professionals worldwide. She supported the initiative to build a National Children’s Hospital in Iraq, served as Honorary Ambassador for the Decade of Literacy of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and continues her commitment to efforts that educate people throughout the world. In 2002 Mrs. Bush created the Laura Bush Foundation for America’s Libraries.

2007

Molly Holt

Molly Holt achieved worldwide recognition for her work in community health treatment and her pioneering advocacy for improved care of disabled children and adoptees around the globe. She served as Chair of the Board of Directors of Holt Children Services in Korea and oversaw the Ilsan Center, a world-class facility in South Korea serving 300 residents with mental or physical disabilities since 1961.

2009

Rosalind Wee

Rosalind L. Wee is a woman of Filipino-Chinese descent, who was raised and lives in the Philippines. She is married to Lee Hiong Wee and blessed with six children. She is a spirited woman who actively works as an entrepreneur, humanitarian, mother, and serious golfer—despite being diagnosed as legally blind after a brain tumor operation. Mrs. Wee was the President of the Pearl S. Buck Foundation Philippines, Inc. She served as Treasurer of the Philippine National Red Cross (Quezon City Chapter) as well as Board member of the inspirational Shepherd’s Voice Radio and TV Foundation, Inc. and Tagaytay Hospital and Medical Center. Mrs. Wee also served as President of the Philippine Federation of Local Councils of Women.

2010

Sheryl WuDunn

Sheryl WuDunn, the first Asian-American reporter to win a Pulitzer Prize, is a best-selling author, business executive and lecturer. She is co-author of *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. She challenges people to turn oppression into opportunity for women worldwide. Ms. WuDunn also led the development of the Half the Sky multi-media effort creating a thoughtful, effective philanthropic strategy that includes an online social game and a documentary series.

2011

Karen Moyer

Karen Moyer is a versatile woman who excels as a business person, mother, wife, and philanthropist. In 2000, Karen and her husband, retired Major League Baseball pitcher Jamie Moyer, founded The Moyer Foundation, a non-profit organization whose mission is to empower children in distress by providing education and support to help them lead healthy and inspired lives. In addition to supporting organizations through grants, The Moyer Foundation created and funds Camp Erin, the largest nationwide network of bereavement camps for children and teens as well as Camp Mariposa, a camp for children affected by addiction in their families. Karen has a strong relationship with her eight children. In addition to their six birth children, the Moyers adopted two daughters from Guatemala.

2013

Esther Hewlett

Inspired by Pearl S. Buck's humanitarian work, Esther Hewlett accepted Pearl Buck's personal invitation to travel to Taipei to help lay the groundwork for opening a Taiwan office to serve Amerasian children. Ms. Hewlett's experience in Taiwan was transformative and led her to a lifetime of commitment working for the rights of women around the world, the ability of young people to change the world, and the building of a global community. Her advocacy and humanitarian efforts on behalf of the Global Fund for Women, New Global Citizens, and the Flora Family Foundation are inspirational.

2015

Pamela Rainey Lawler

Pamela Rainey Lawler is the founder of Philabundance, the leading organization in the Philadelphia region dedicated to eliminating hunger and food insecurity. Philabundance was founded in 1984 with a \$1,500 investment and now serves men, women, and children every week. One of the first in the nation to successfully collect and distribute surplus perishable foods safely and efficiently, Philabundance serves as a model for other cities and food banks to access a previously untapped source for emergency food. Pamela inspires others through her mentorship of the next generation of innovators and is a sought-after speaker on the challenges facing social entrepreneurs and others interested in developing and sustaining social impact ventures.

2016

Jane Golden

Jane Golden is the founder and executive director of the City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program (Mural Arts). Under the driving force of Ms. Golden's direction, Mural Arts has created more than 3,800 works of public art through innovative collaborations with community-based organizations, city agencies, nonprofit organizations, schools, the private sector, and philanthropies. Through these partnerships, Ms. Golden has developed innovative and rigorous programs in youth art education, restorative justice, and behavioral health that have made it possible for thousands to experience and witness the power of art. She also has overseen a series of increasingly complex, ambitious, and award-winning public art projects, and is currently sought after nationally and internationally as an expert on urban transformation through art.

2017

Pamela Varkony

Pamela Varkony is considered to be a thought-leader in women's empowerment. She was a gubernatorial appointee to the PA State Commission for Women and recipient of numerous awards. She received the Excellence in Journalism Award from the PA Women's Press Association. Her work in Afghanistan was selected for the VERA Award from the Business Council for Peace. The Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce recognized her business leadership with the Athena Award. For her leadership in women's issues, she received the Gateway Award from the American Association of University Women. Ms. Varkony is a noted speaker on the topic of gender equality and is co-author of a book on the history of Bucks County called *Our Lost Tobickon Valley*.

2018

Renée Cardwell Hughes

The Honorable Renée Cardwell Hughes, the retired CEO of the American Red Cross of Eastern Pennsylvania, oversaw relief operations during Hurricane Irene, Hurricane Sandy, and the 2015 Amtrak train derailment. Previously, Judge Hughes served as Trial Judge for the Court of Common Pleas in Philadelphia. Judge Hughes was inducted into the International Women in Homeland Security and Emergency Management 2013 Hall of Fame. She was recognized in 2013 and in 2017 by the *Philadelphia Business Journal* as a Minority Business Leader. In 2014 *Philadelphia Style* magazine named her one of the city's Power Women. In 2016 she was recognized by the *Philadelphia Business Journal* as a Woman of Distinction. Judge Hughes recently gave a TedX Talk on leadership and success—a topic on which she speaks frequently.

2019

Nydia Han

Nydia Han is an Emmy award-winning Consumer Investigative Reporter, Troubleshooter, and co-anchor of Action News Sunday mornings for 6abc in Philadelphia. Ms. Han is also the activist creator of the online documentary series, #ThisIsAmerica. This three-part series shares unique American stories about diversity, discrimination, and bridging cultural divides, and encourages the audience to be positive agents of change and unity in the community. In addition, Ms. Han is on the community advisory board for the Asian American Women's Coalition, mentors aspiring journalists, and is passionate about raising awareness and funds for lung cancer research. She recently gave a TedX Philadelphia talk on her documentary, what it means to be American, and bridging racial divides.

2020

Julie Henning

Julie Henning is an Amerasian born in South Korea during the Korean War. At age 13, she was brought to America by Nobel Prize-winning author Pearl S. Buck and raised as her daughter.

Today, Julie has a family of her own—a loving husband, two married sons with wonderful wives, and five energetic grandsons. She is a retired educator who loves to share her story of hope and grace with churches and civic organizations.

Julie continues to advocate for Amerasians through newspaper articles, radio interviews, national television, and US Congressional hearings. Julie was honored to present the Pearl S. Buck Woman of the Year (now Woman of Influence) Award to two past recipients—Korean First Lady Madame Lee He Ho in 2001 and US First Lady Laura Bush in 2006. Julie's memoir, *A Rose in a Ditch*, was published in 2019.