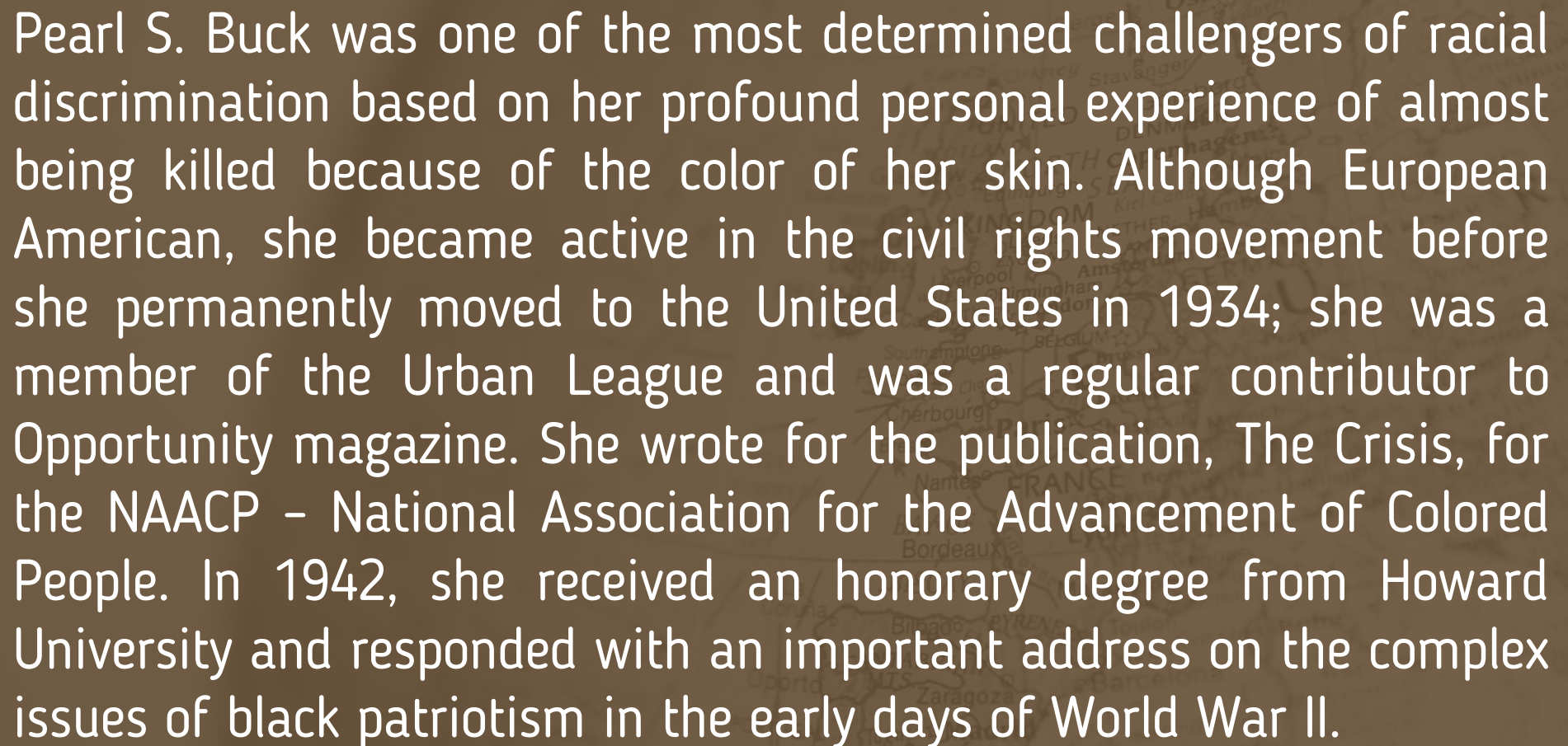


A silhouette of a person standing with their arms raised in a gesture of triumph or protest, set against a dramatic sunset sky with scattered clouds and birds in flight. The foreground shows the silhouettes of tall grasses.

Pearl S. Buck
Taking
Civil Rights

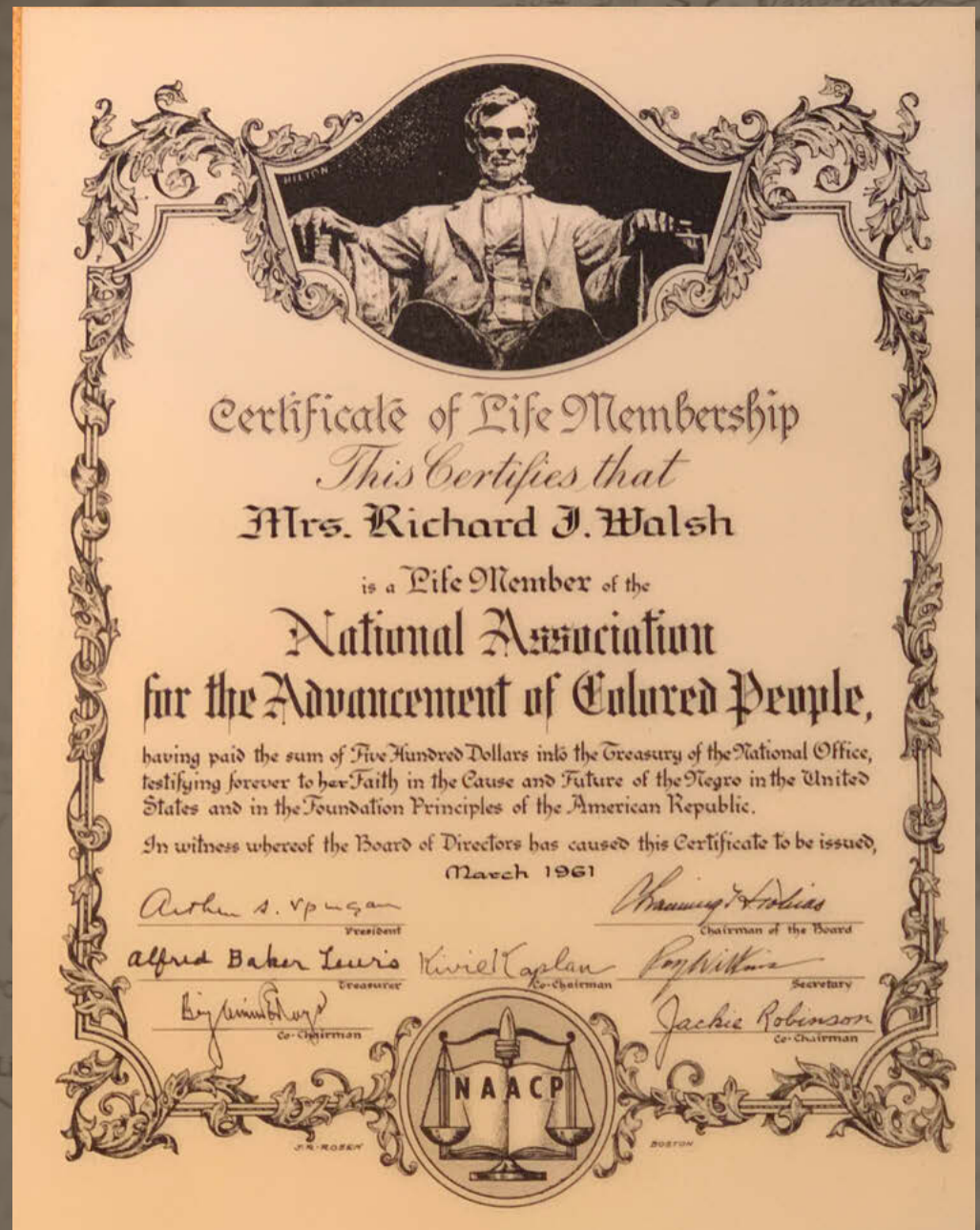
Action
in America

An Online Exhibit Presented by Pearl S. Buck International



Pearl S. Buck was one of the most determined challengers of racial discrimination based on her profound personal experience of almost being killed because of the color of her skin. Although European American, she became active in the civil rights movement before she permanently moved to the United States in 1934; she was a member of the Urban League and was a regular contributor to Opportunity magazine. She wrote for the publication, The Crisis, for the NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. In 1942, she received an honorary degree from Howard University and responded with an important address on the complex issues of black patriotism in the early days of World War II.

In 1961, she became a lifetime member of the NAACP. She made major contributions to the struggle for civil rights years before most mainstream intellectuals even noticed racial injustice. Buck associated herself with many notable influential figures of African American heritage and used her writing to speak out about this injustice.



NAACP Plaque noting her married name to her second husband, Richard Walsh



Not only did Buck advocate for racial equality in the public arena but in her private life as well. Pearl S. Buck adopted two daughters who were of African American descent in 1951 and 1957. Buck believed that a child with love fared better than a child without, and that love is color blind, and can teach others not to hate. She writes in 1972, *I Am the Better Woman for Having My Two Black Children.*

Pearl S. Buck pictured with her adopted daughter, Henriette.



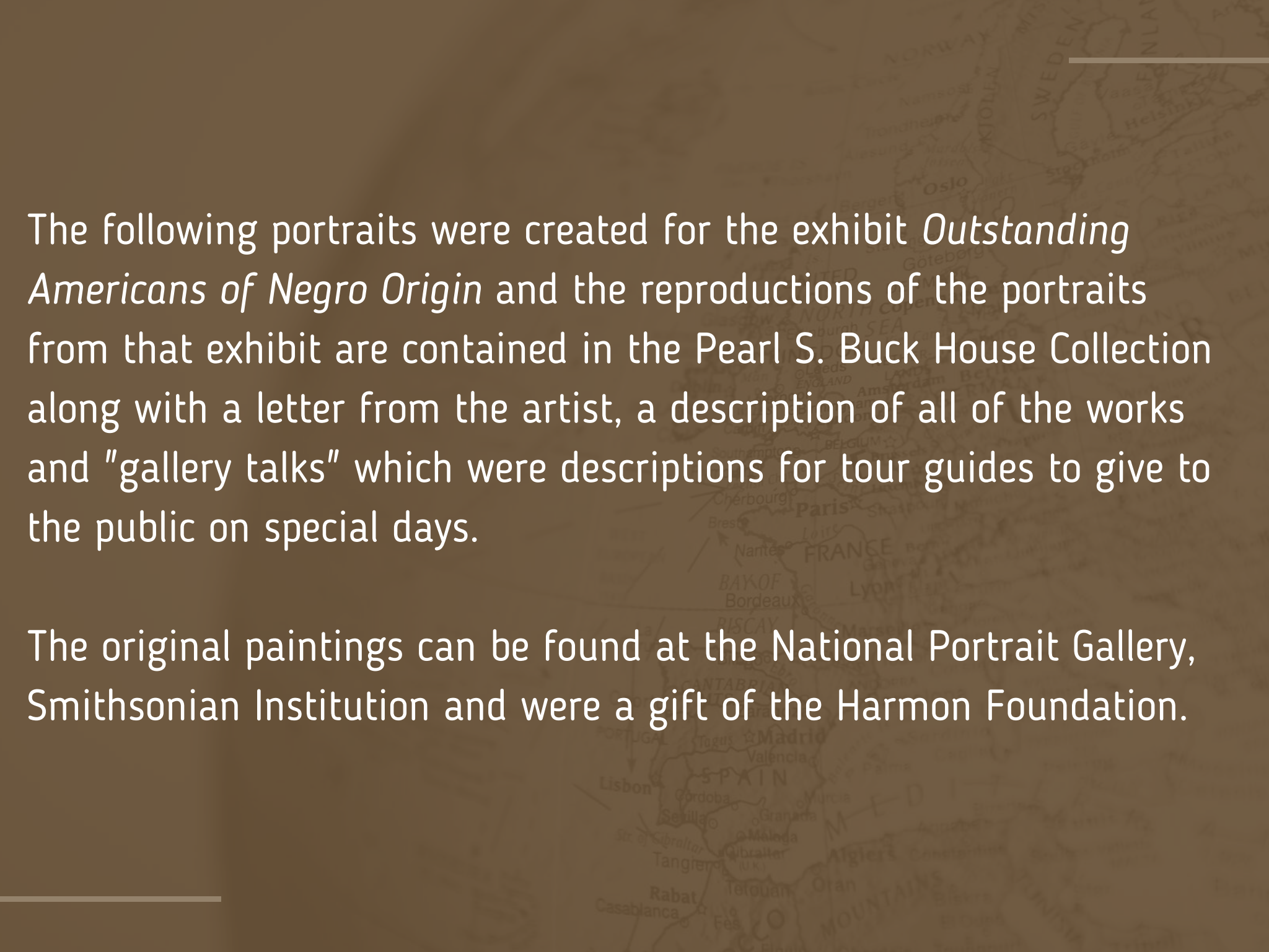
Pearl S. Buck Pictured with two black adopted daughters.

Adopting a black child into my white family has taught me much I could not otherwise have known.

Although I have many black friends and read many books by black writers, I rejoice that I have had the deep experience of being mother to a black child.

Pearl S. Buck

Pearl S. Buck and one of the organizations she created, the East and West Association, held circulating exhibits for the public. One of these exhibits was created by the artist Betsy Graves Reyneau titled *Outstanding Americans of Negro Origin*. Reyneau was an American painter, best known for her series of portraits of prominent African Americans. Reyneau, a suffragist, was arrested for picketing the White House on July 14, 1917 and jailed for four days. During her time in Europe she gave refuge to Jewish people fleeing from Hitler. Just like Pearl S. Buck she came back to America and saw the treatment of African Americans and was horrified. In response, she created the exhibit which was sponsored by the Harmon Foundation. Pearl Buck's East and West Association helped to publicize the important exhibit to the world.



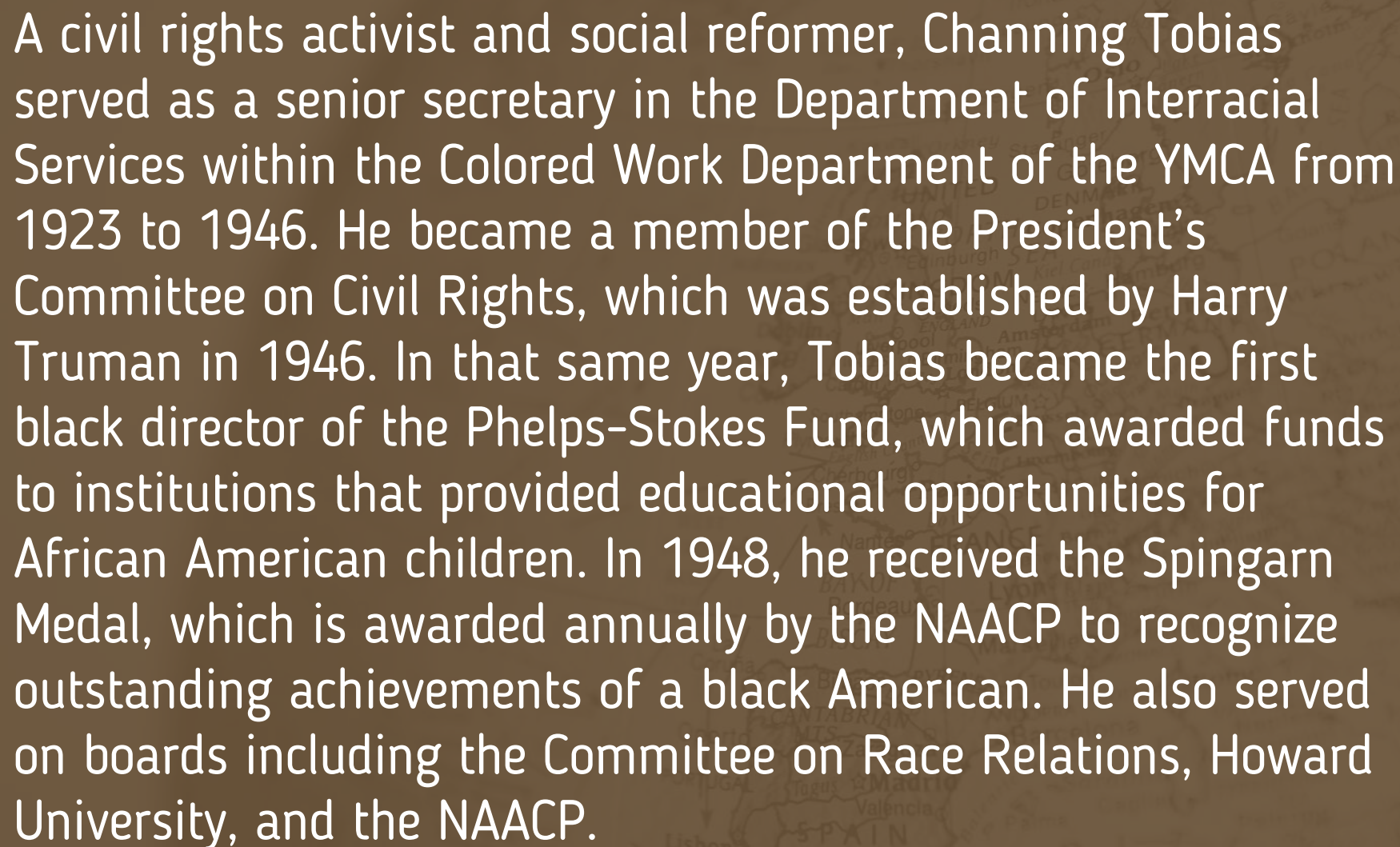
The following portraits were created for the exhibit *Outstanding Americans of Negro Origin* and the reproductions of the portraits from that exhibit are contained in the Pearl S. Buck House Collection along with a letter from the artist, a description of all of the works and "gallery talks" which were descriptions for tour guides to give to the public on special days.

The original paintings can be found at the National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution and were a gift of the Harmon Foundation.

*CHANNING
TOBIAS*

(1882-1961)





A civil rights activist and social reformer, Channing Tobias served as a senior secretary in the Department of Interracial Services within the Colored Work Department of the YMCA from 1923 to 1946. He became a member of the President's Committee on Civil Rights, which was established by Harry Truman in 1946. In that same year, Tobias became the first black director of the Phelps-Stokes Fund, which awarded funds to institutions that provided educational opportunities for African American children. In 1948, he received the Spingarn Medal, which is awarded annually by the NAACP to recognize outstanding achievements of a black American. He also served on boards including the Committee on Race Relations, Howard University, and the NAACP.

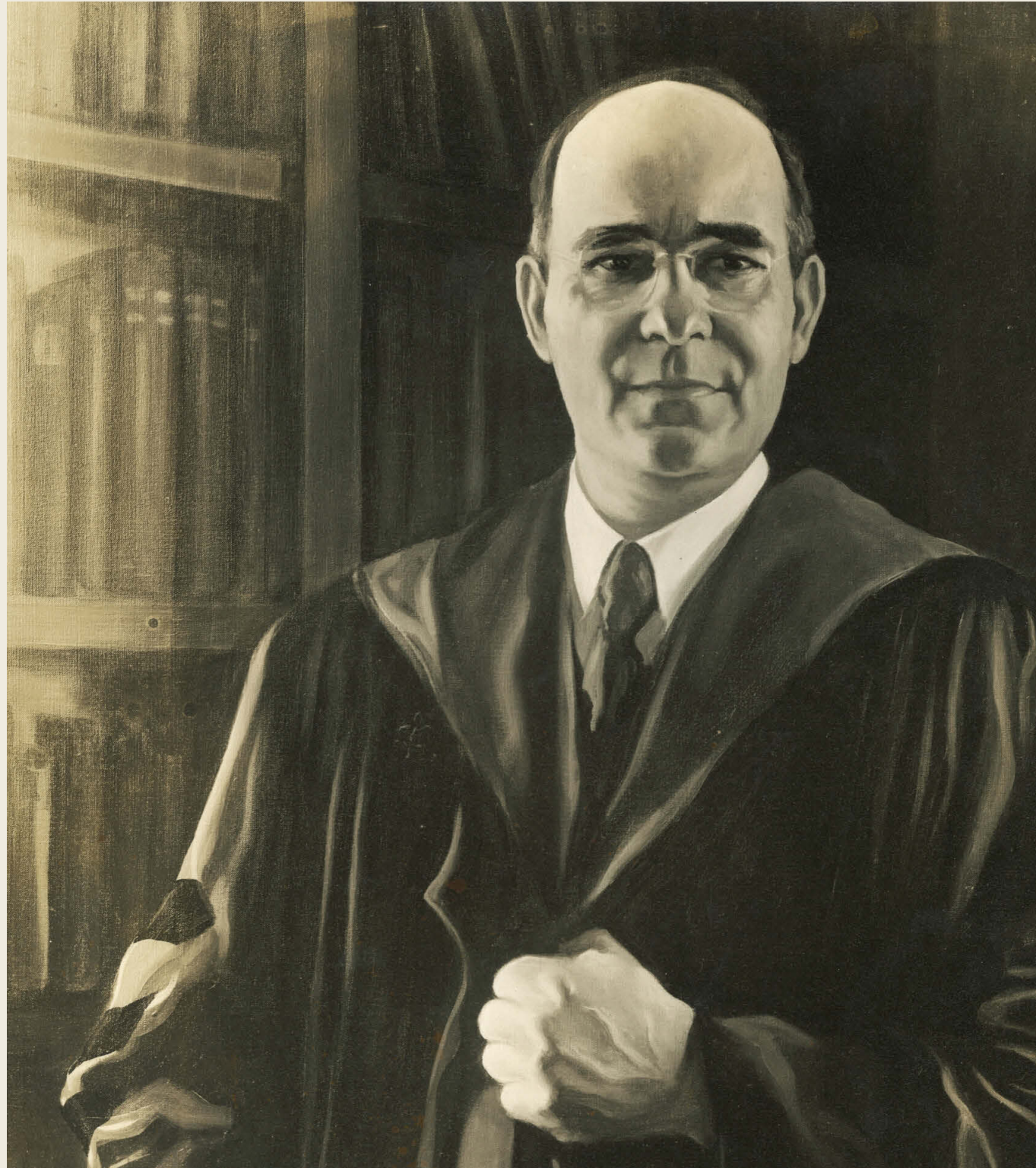


As a friend, Pearl S. Buck wrote to Channing Tobias regarding initiatives such as the East and West Association. The Association was dedicated to cultural exchange and understanding between Asia and the West. Buck and Tobias also joined together at the Greater New York Interracial Rally in June of 1942.

Pearl S. Buck Pictured with Channing Tobias at a Rally in 1942

MORDECAI
WYATT
JOHNSON

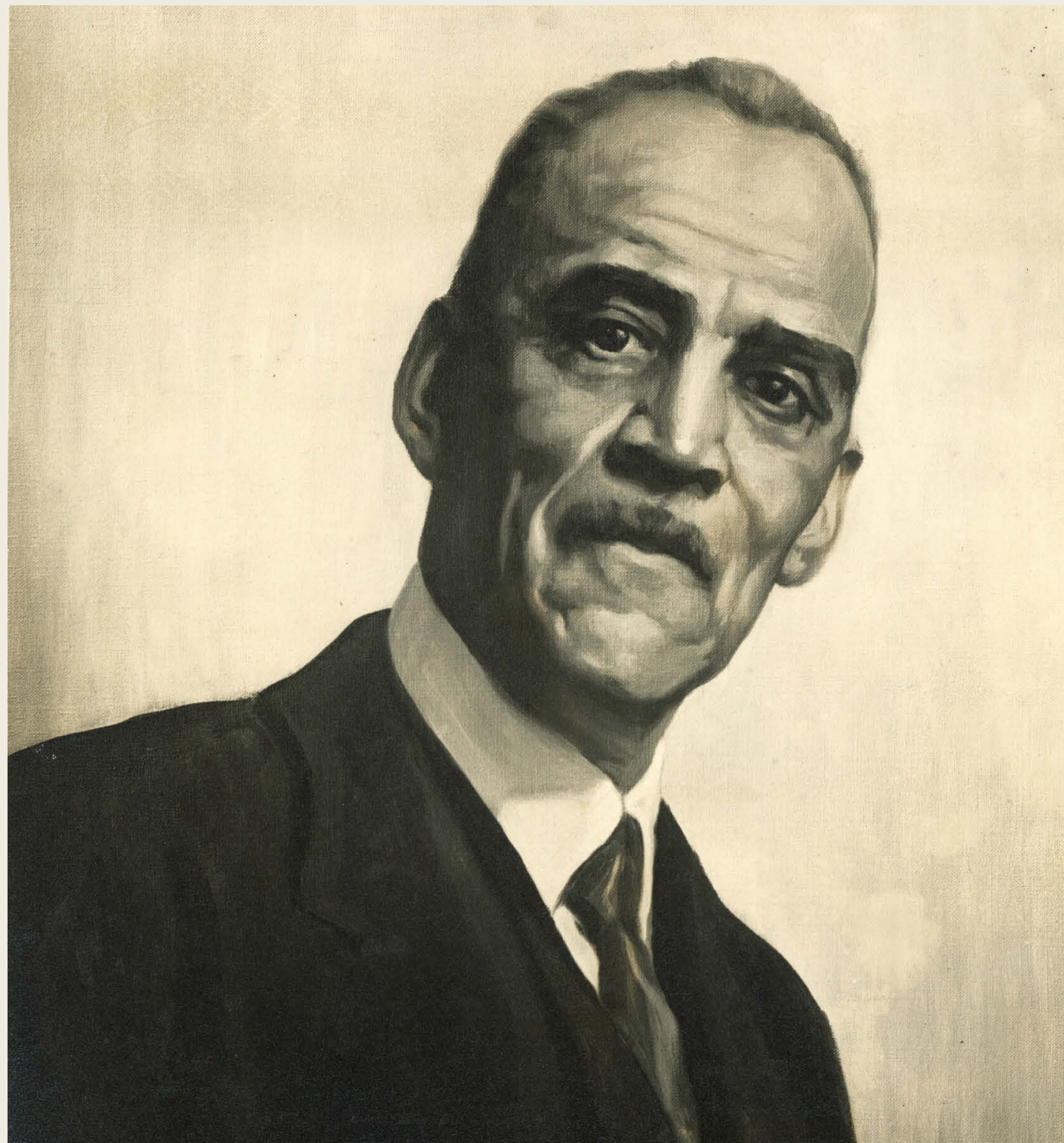
(1890-1976)



An African American educator, clergyman, administrator, and public speaker, Mordecai Wyatt Johnson was unanimously elected the eleventh president of Howard University, and became the first African American to serve as the permanent head of that institution. He served as president of the college from 1926 to 1960. He was also considered one of the three leading African American preachers of the early 20th century, among names such as Vernon Johns and Howard Thurman. Pearl S. Buck received a Doctor of Laws from Howard University in 1942 under the leadership of Johnson. Pearl S. Buck delivered her first groundbreaking commencement speech titled *Equality* on that same day. She accepted the invitation to speak because she believed that education had the power to eliminate prejudice.

EUGENE
KINCKLE
JONES

(1885-1954)



An African American intellectual and social worker, Eugene Kinckle Jones began working as the first field secretary for the newly formed National Urban League (NUL) in 1911. In 1917, he was appointed as Executive Secretary of NUL until his retirement in 1941. In 1923, he helped to launch *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* magazine.

Pearl S. Buck and Eugene Kinckle Jones worked together when she joined the NUL as an executive board member in 1935. Both used the NUL to work with other social reformers on behalf of African Americans and against racial discrimination. While Jones helped launch "Opportunity" magazine, Buck contributed articles such as *The Road to the Future*, *Wanted: True Drama of the Negro Race*, and *As a Man Thinketh, So Is He*.

ANNA
ARNOLD
HEDGEMAN

(1899-1990)



Anna Arnold Hedgeman was an African American civil rights leader, educator, policy consultant, and political activist. She became the first black woman to graduate from Hamline University, and in 1954 she was also the first to serve on the New York City mayoral cabinet. She was the first black person to hold a Federal Security Agency position, and the only woman on the executive committee that organized the March on Washington in 1963. She became executive director of the National Council for a Permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission, which allowed her to work with the NAACP, the Anti-Defamation League, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and the United Council of Church Women.

Anna Arnold Hedgeman asked to meet with Pearl S. Buck regarding the National Council for a Permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee. After that, Hedgeman also wrote about paying her dues for the East and West Association.

WALTER
WHITE

(1893-1955)



A leading civil rights advocate and Executive Secretary of the NAACP from 1931 to 1955, Walter White led the fight for anti-lynching legislation and advocated to eliminate all-white primaries, poll taxes, and de jure segregation. White extensively used the words of Pearl S. Buck to spell out his position on racial equality. He cited *Tinder for Tomorrow*, and said that it was an eloquent warning against the blindness of racism.

Pearl S. Buck corresponded with White, stating, "Please be sure that I am determined to do anything I can on this problem of race prejudice in our country." In 1942, in a speech White delivered at Madison Square Garden, he stated, "Tragedy of the situation is that only a few intelligent and brave souls in the white world are wise enough to see the picture as it is," and named Eleanor Roosevelt and Pearl S. Buck. In 1948, White was asked to serve on the Board of the East and West Association. Buck also contributed articles to "The Crisis", a publication created by the NAACP, including an article titled *Democracy and the Negro*.

MARY
MCLEOD
BETHUNE
(1875-1955)



A prominent educator, political leader, social visionary, and activist who laid the foundation for the civil rights era, Mary McLeod Bethune served as President of the National Association of Colored Women and was the founder of Bethune-Cookman College and the National Council of Negro Women.

Pearl S. Buck said, “Mrs. Bethune is not only a great woman in herself and in what she has done, but she is the proof of what one person can do, with inspiration and determination. May many follow in her glorious train.” The two women served on the Urban League Board together. Buck also supplied articles, such as *The Wisdom and the Power*, for a publication produced by the National Council of Negro Women called *Aframerican Women’s Journal*.

ALAIN
LOCKE

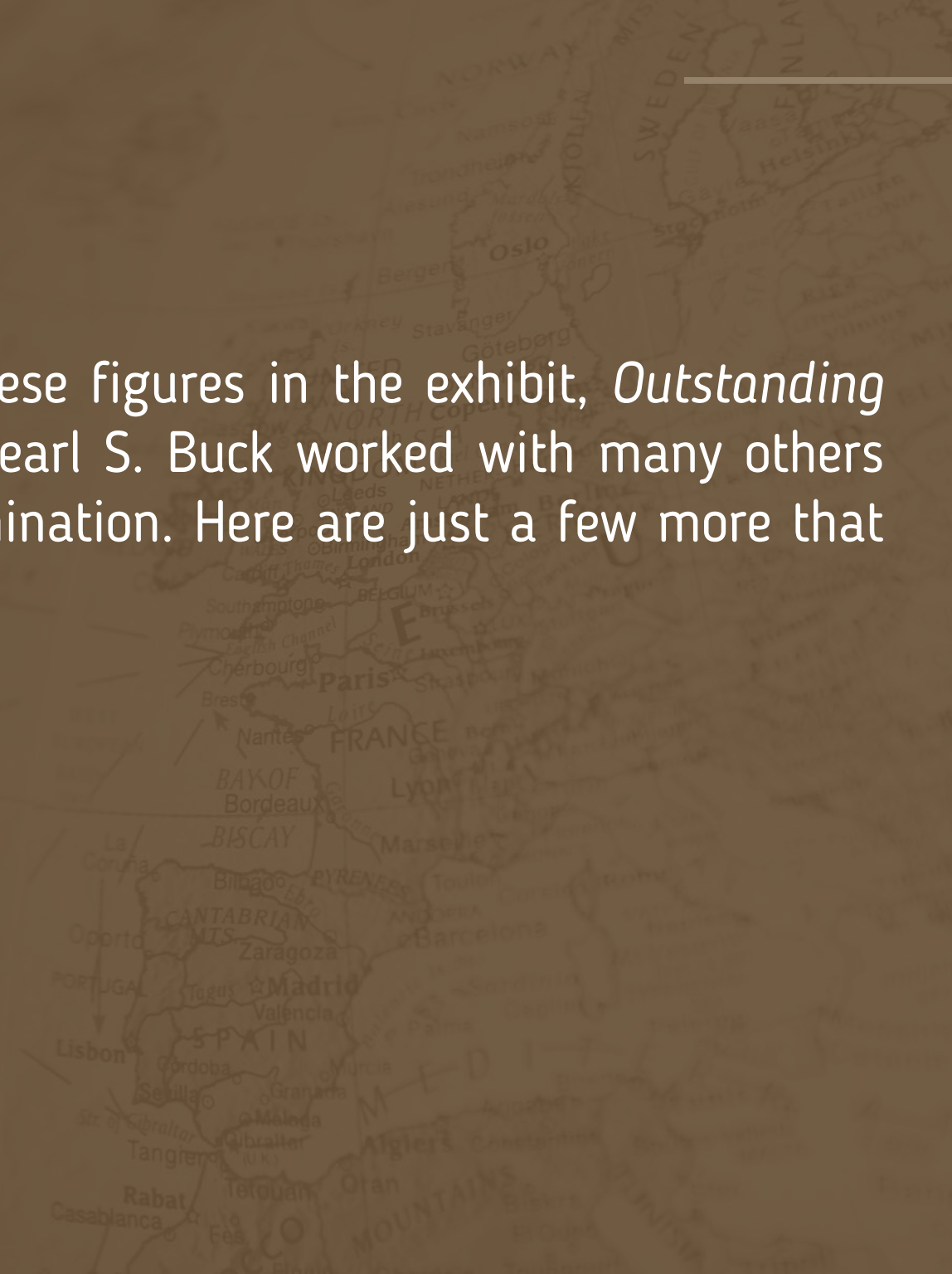
(1885-1954)



American writer, philosopher, educator, patron of the arts, and leading black intellectual Alain Locke was the first African American Rhodes Scholar in 1907. Locke eventually became a philosophy professor at Howard University. Locke is best remembered as a leader and chief interpreter of the Harlem Renaissance, 1918-1937, a blossoming of African American culture, particularly in the arts and literary worlds.

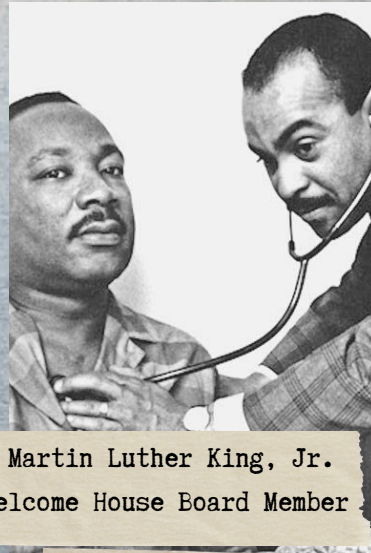
Pearl S. Buck and Alain Locke knew each other from meetings of the Urban League. In 1933, Locke spoke at a dinner held by the Urban League to bid farewell to Buck. In 1942, Buck spoke at a luncheon at the Astor Hotel in New York where she warned the audience that American discrimination against blacks usefully served the purposes of Japanese propaganda. Locke wrote a congratulatory letter for the speech thanking her for speaking “so plainly and incisively. Few others could have been so outspoken in the present state of public opinion, yet this is just what is imperatively needed.”

In addition to highlighting these figures in the exhibit, *Outstanding Americans of Negro Origin*, Pearl S. Buck worked with many others to fight against racial discrimination. Here are just a few more that took action with her:





Pearl S. Buck and Eslanda Goode Robeson wrote "American Argument" together



Martin Luther King, Jr.
Welcome House Board Member



Sadie T.M. Alexander
first African-American woman to practice law in Pennsylvania

& Dr. Walter Lomax
Physician, Businessman,
and Philanthropist



Langston Hughes

American Poet
Called Pearl S. Buck the
"Current Harriet Beecher Stowe
of the race"



Paul Robeson
American Singer, Actor,
Political Activist



W.E.B. Dubois American sociologist,
historian, author, editor, and
activist



Kenneth and Mamie Clark
psychologists active
in civil rights movement

Be the People

Article I
The United States shall be composed of no more than States, and this Article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified by three fourths of all the States which shall have been at the time of its adoption.

Section 1. All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States, which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.

Pearl S. Buck did so much during her lifetime to fight racial discrimination so what can you do today?

Civil Rights

Section 3. The Senate shall have one vote.

Consequence of the expiration of the term of any one of the Senators or Representatives, or of any one of the Judges, shall not affect the validity of the acts and proceedings of the Senate, House of Representatives, or the Courts respectively, until their successors are chosen.

Ways You Can Take Action:

- Explore Talking About Race at nmaahc.si.edu/talkingaboutrace
- Donate to the Loveland Foundation
- Use Welcome Workplace, a program designed to help schools, businesses, and organizations establish an environment that embraces diversity and inclusion. Visit <https://pearlsbuck.org/welcome-workplace>
- Connect with local activist groups or find protests in your area
- Watch stream-to-donate videos on YouTube
- Take responsibility for educating yourself and having difficult conversations about racism
- Take action by joining us for the Pearl S. Buck: Taking Action Tour at the Pearl S. Buck House. Learn about what Pearl S. Buck found important including shedding light on marginalized communities such as people of color