

Comprehensive Exploration of Pearl S. Buck's Advocacy for Human Rights and Civil Rights

Pearl S. Buck, primarily known for her literary and humanitarian endeavors, her helping mixed-race children abandoned by the U.S. military, showcasing her unwavering dedication and selflessness. Remarkably, despite her white heritage, Pearl S. Buck began advocating for justice for Black Americans as early as 1933. However, modern historians often overlook her significant contributions.

In the early 1930s, the United States was grappling with deeply entrenched racial segregation and discrimination, particularly against African Americans. This period marked the height of the Jim Crow era, characterized by laws enforcing racial segregation in public facilities, schools, and housing, as well as widespread societal discrimination and violence against Black individuals. During the 1930s, the Great Depression exacerbated racial tensions as economic hardship fueled competition for scarce resources. African Americans faced disproportionately high rates of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness, further exacerbating their marginalized status in society. Additionally, the 1930s witnessed the rise of racial activism and advocacy, with organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leading the charge for civil rights and equality. The Harlem Renaissance, a cultural and intellectual movement centered in Harlem, New York, also flourished during this period, highlighting the artistic and literary contributions of African Americans while challenging racial stereotypes and discrimination.

Against this backdrop of racial strife and social change, Pearl S. Buck, herself a prominent author and social activist, penned her thoughts on race relations and pride. Buck's own experiences living in China and her family's history in the American South likely influenced her perspectives on race and equality. Her essay reflects a nuanced understanding of racial dynamics and a call for empathy, understanding, and unity amidst the pervasive discrimination of the time.

Here is a brief of Pearl S. Buck's article "Race Relations and Race Pride": My grandparents what they used to tell me with such pride that it put pride into me was that neither of my grandfathers, although they were landed men, and men of some wealth and position, was ever willing to buy or sell human beings. Indeed, my paternal grandfather seems at times to have been considerably persecuted because he made it a principle that he hired men irrespective of whether or not they were colored or white, and he paid them equal wages for equal work. So from my ancestors I have the tradition of racial equality and I am proud that it is so. . . . It seems to me there is nothing so stupid, so wicked, as pride in mere race and nothing more, no matter where that pride is found. Yet I learned to realize that such persons were not worthy of contempt or notice, not worth anger, even, and a poor rickshaw puller in Shanghai taught me that. . . . One day I saw in Shanghai an American marine give his rickshaw puller a brutal kick. The rickshaw puller in Shanghai is proverbially the poorest and most downtrodden of creatures. He drifts there in extreme poverty from all over China. This one was no exception. He was a middle aged man, and starving thin, and he had been pulling a big American half again his size. I stopped and spoke to the American with indignation, and the Chinese puller watched this, perfectly understanding what was going on, although I spoke in English. At last he smiled and said to comfort me, "Never mind, Lady; look at him! You and I see he is a man of no understanding. Even among white men if there is one of understanding he does not behave like this. The rickshaw man was completely superior and he taught me this, that pride of race is always strongest in those who have the least cause to be proud of themselves. I have never found this to fail; I have seen it work out truly in hundreds of cases in the Far East where white men are few and yet of many sorts. But I am glad to have lived among those of another race than my own for yet another reason. It has taught me not only to see and be ashamed of race arrogance in members of my own race, but I know through bitter experience what it is to suffer because others despise me for being white. " In the article, Pearl S. Buck offers insight into the pervasive discrimination prevalent in the 1930s, particularly in the United States. Buck, drawing from her own experiences and family history, illustrates the damaging effects of racial prejudice.

Firstly, Buck highlights her grandfather's principled stance against slavery, which serves as a testament to her family's commitment to racial equality. This underscores the long-standing struggle against discrimination that existed even within families with Southern roots. Furthermore, Buck recounts her experiences in China, where she witnessed and confronted racial arrogance and violence perpetrated by individuals from her own racial

background. This suggests that racial prejudice was not confined to one geographical location but was a global issue that manifested in various forms.

Buck's narrative also includes a poignant anecdote about facing death due to her skin color, highlighting the life-threatening consequences of racial discrimination. This personal encounter underscores the urgency of addressing and combating racial hatred. Throughout the article, Buck emphasizes the need for understanding, forgiveness, and dignity in the face of discrimination. She argues that bitterness and resentment only perpetuate the cycle of hatred, advocating instead for peaceful means of combatting prejudice. Additionally, Buck celebrates the unique qualities and contributions of different racial groups, promoting a message of unity and appreciation for diversity. She sees America as enriched by its multiculturalism and calls on individuals to embrace and develop their inherent talents for the betterment of society. Overall, through her article, Buck sheds light on the historical backdrop of discrimination in the 1930s while offering a message of hope, resilience, and unity in the face of racial prejudice. She urges readers to confront and overcome discrimination through understanding, forgiveness, and pride in their cultural heritage.

Pearl S. Buck: A Champion Against Discrimination in 1930s America

In the early 1930s, amidst a backdrop of widespread racial discrimination and stereotypes, Pearl S. Buck emerged as a powerful voice against prejudice, particularly concerning the Black community in America. Through her actions, writings, and public statements, Buck challenged societal norms and advocated for racial equality. One significant instance of her efforts can be observed in a report from *The Pittsburgh Courier* on January 7, 1933, shedding light on her impactful visit to Harlem and her impassioned address at the Y.W.C.A.

The report paints a vivid picture of Harlem during that time, a community often misrepresented and misunderstood by the broader society. It highlights the prevailing stereotypes perpetuated by media, portraying Black individuals primarily as entertainers or caricatures. Despite these misconceptions, there existed a cohort of serious-minded individuals in Harlem, dedicated to constructive endeavors and societal progress.

Among those who recognized the potential and significance of Harlem's residents was Pearl S. Buck, renowned author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Good Earth." Buck's visit to Harlem was not merely a fleeting gesture but a deliberate effort to engage with the community and support its endeavors. Organized by the Friends of Opportunity Magazine, her presence at the Y.W.C.A. represented a convergence of intellectual minds and creative spirits.

Buck's address at the gathering underscored her deep-rooted belief in racial equality, a conviction shaped by her upbringing and life experiences. Born and raised in China, she spent much of her life immersed in a culture different from her own. This exposure instilled in her a sense of detachment, enabling her to view racial issues with clarity and empathy. Moreover, Buck's remarks revealed a candid acknowledgment of the flaws within her own racial community, condemning ignorance and arrogance wherever she encountered it.

Central to Buck's message was her rejection of racial superiority and her commitment to dismantling the barriers that divided humanity. Her words resonated with the audience, transcending the boundaries of race and ethnicity. By aligning herself with the cause of racial equality, Buck demonstrated solidarity with marginalized communities and challenged the status quo.

Furthermore, Buck's visit to Harlem served as a counter-narrative to prevailing stereotypes, offering a glimpse into the vibrancy and diversity of the community. Through her interactions with Harlem residents and her participation in cultural events, she shattered preconceived notions and fostered mutual understanding. Her presence alongside esteemed figures from the Black community, such as Sterling Brown and Annie Wiggins Brown, symbolized a spirit of collaboration and shared purpose.

In retrospect, Pearl S. Buck's visit to Harlem in 1933 represents a pivotal moment in the fight against racial discrimination. Her advocacy for racial equality, coupled with her genuine engagement with the community, left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of those she encountered. Beyond mere words, Buck's actions embodied the principles of empathy, solidarity, and social justice. In an era marked by racial strife and division, she stood as a beacon of hope and a catalyst for change.

In conclusion, Pearl S. Buck's significant efforts against discrimination in the early 1930s exemplify her

unwavering commitment to justice and equality. Through her visit to Harlem and her impassioned address at the Y.W.C.A., she challenged prevailing stereotypes and advocated for mutual respect and understanding. Her legacy continues to inspire generations of activists and advocates, reminding us of the power of compassion and solidarity in the face of adversity.

In 1933, amidst a climate where white would often stare at Black individuals with curiosity or judgment on public transportation, in shops, and elsewhere. Pearl S. Buck visited Harlem in Manhattan, a hub of African-American heritage. In 1934, she supported the anti-lynching bill, advocating against the heinous crime of lynching perpetrated against Black individuals. Additionally, Pearl S. Buck fervently urged for the improvement of educational opportunities for Black students.

Pearl S. Buck's efforts to advocate for an anti-lynching bill were profoundly important for Black Americans for several crucial reasons:

Legal Protection: Lynching, the extrajudicial killing of individuals, primarily Black Americans, by mobs, was a pervasive and horrific practice in the United States, particularly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Despite its barbarity, lynching was often carried out with impunity, as perpetrators were rarely held accountable under existing laws. An anti-lynching bill would have provided legal protection and recourse for Black Americans who were targeted by racist violence, signaling a commitment to justice and equality under the law.

Civil Rights and Human Dignity: The prevalence of lynching not only resulted in the loss of countless lives but also instilled fear and terror within Black communities across the nation. By advocating for an anti-lynching bill, Pearl S. Buck sought to uphold the fundamental principles of civil rights and human dignity. She recognized that every individual, regardless of race, deserved the right to life and due process under the law. Her efforts represented a moral imperative to confront and dismantle the systemic racism that perpetuated violence and injustice against Black Americans.

Raising Awareness: Buck's prominence as a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and social activist provided a platform to raise awareness about the brutal reality of lynching and its devastating impact on Black communities. Through her writings, speeches, and public advocacy, she drew attention to the urgent need for legislative action to address this heinous crime. By shining a spotlight on the issue, Buck helped galvanize public support and mobilize grassroots movements dedicated to ending lynching and promoting racial equality.

Challenging White Supremacy: Lynching was not only a manifestation of racial violence but also a tool of white supremacy used to enforce racial hierarchy and maintain social control. By actively campaigning for an anti-lynching bill, Buck challenged the entrenched power structures that perpetuated racial discrimination and oppression. Her advocacy represented a direct challenge to the status quo and a call for transformative change in the fight against systemic racism.

Symbol of Solidarity: Buck's advocacy for an anti-lynching bill demonstrated her solidarity with the Black community and her commitment to standing alongside them in the struggle for justice and equality. At a time when many white Americans remained silent or complicit in the face of racial violence, Buck's outspoken condemnation of lynching sent a powerful message of allyship and support. Her actions exemplified the importance of interracial solidarity in the fight against racial injustice.

Pearl S. Buck's efforts to advocate for an anti-lynching bill were instrumental in the ongoing struggle for racial justice and equality in the United States. By seeking legal protection, upholding civil rights, raising awareness, challenging white supremacy, and demonstrating solidarity, Buck made a significant and lasting impact in the fight against lynching and the broader struggle for racial equality. Her legacy serves as a reminder of the importance of using one's voice and influence to confront injustice and promote positive social change.

Pearl S. Buck's Activism Legacy on Black's Human Rights

Pearl S. Buck, a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, is celebrated not only for her literary contributions but also for her unwavering commitment to human rights. Her activism played a crucial role in the early civil rights movements, significantly advancing the cause of racial equality. Alongside other prominent figures like Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois and Eleanor Roosevelt, Buck laid a solid foundation for the civil rights movements that later gained momentum under leaders like Martin Luther King Jr. This article delves into Pearl S. Buck's enduring legacy in the

fight for Black human rights, highlighting her multifaceted contributions and the lasting impact of her advocacy. The 1930s were a pivotal decade for the burgeoning civil rights movement in the United States. Amidst widespread segregation and discrimination, advocacy for Black human rights became essential for achieving equality and justice. This period saw an increasing awareness of systemic oppression and a growing movement to address it. Activists like Pearl S. Buck, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Eleanor Roosevelt played crucial roles in shaping the trajectory of the civil rights movement, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for equality.

Despite her white heritage, Pearl S. Buck was a fierce advocate for racial equality. Her dedication to improving race relations and upholding human rights was evident in her numerous articles, speeches, and public engagements. Buck's advocacy against segregation and discrimination underscored her pivotal role in the struggle for civil rights and social justice. Her collaboration with Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, a renowned scholar and civil rights leader, further exemplified her commitment to the cause. Buck's literary works often addressed themes of injustice and human rights, using her platform to raise awareness about racial issues. She believed in the power of storytelling to change hearts and minds, and her novels frequently depicted the struggles of marginalized communities. Beyond her writing, Buck was an active participant in public discussions on racial injustices, lending her voice to the growing civil rights movement.

In February 1942, Pearl S. Buck, Eleanor Roosevelt, and an unnamed Black hero from Pearl Harbor were listed on the Race Relations Honor Roll. This recognition highlighted their significant contributions to promoting better race relations during a tumultuous time in American history. The Honor Roll was part of a broader effort to acknowledge and celebrate those who worked tirelessly to improve racial harmony and justice. Pearl S. Buck's collaboration with Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois further solidified her role as a champion of racial equality. Dr. Du Bois, a co-founder of the NAACP and a prominent intellectual, was a tireless advocate for the rights of African Americans. His partnership with Buck demonstrated the importance of solidarity across racial lines in the fight for equality. Together, they participated in discussions and initiatives aimed at addressing racial injustices and promoting social justice.

Pearl S. Buck's contributions to civil rights were frequently highlighted in notable publications that addressed racial issues and promoted unity. Her involvement in these efforts underscored her commitment to using her influence to advocate for change. An exemplary contribution to national unity and the clarification of war aims is found in the 100-page special edition issued by the Chicago Defender on September 27, 1942. Editors and contributors, including Pearl S. Buck, addressed strengthening the bond between the white and Black races. They emphasized the importance of fighting against all forms of race hate and caste, whether in America, England, Japan, or Germany. This special edition featured contributions from distinguished figures like President Roosevelt, General MacArthur, Wendell Willkie, Francis Biddle, Justice Black, Langston Hughes, H. G. Wells, and Harold Laski. It served as a storehouse of enlightening facts and stimulating thought on the Black role in the war, aiming to foster greater understanding and unity.

Pressure from the Negro press and organizations, alongside criticism from prominent white leaders like Wendell Willkie and Pearl S. Buck, resulted in the Navy Department changing its policy regarding the enlistment of Black individuals. The modified policy allowed Black volunteers to enlist for general services in the reserve components of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. All ratings in these branches of the Naval Service were opened to them, with recruiting set to begin once a suitable training station was established. This policy change marked a significant step towards greater inclusion and equality within the armed forces. Pearl Buck supplemented her letter to the New York Times with an even more admonitory note in her address at a Book and Author Luncheon in New York City. She pointed out the ongoing injustices faced by Black Americans, stating, "The Colored American... even in defense of the country, is not allowed his share of work." Her persistent advocacy highlighted the need for systemic change and the importance of addressing racial discrimination at all levels of society.

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, a co-founder of the NAACP and a prominent scholar, was a tireless advocate for the rights of African Americans. His intellectual contributions and activism were instrumental in challenging the status quo and advocating for systemic changes. Du Bois' collaboration with Pearl S. Buck and other civil rights leaders amplified the call for equality and justice. Du Bois' work as a sociologist and historian provided a foundational

understanding of the systemic nature of racial discrimination. His writings, including “The Souls of Black Folk,” offered profound insights into the Black experience in America. Du Bois also played a key role in organizing and participating in Pan-African Congresses, which sought to address the issues faced by people of African descent worldwide. Du Bois’ activism extended beyond academia. He was actively involved in civil rights organizations and initiatives, including the Niagara Movement and the NAACP. His efforts to mobilize and inspire African Americans to fight for their rights were pivotal in the early 20th-century civil rights movement. Du Bois’ partnership with figures like Pearl S. Buck demonstrated the importance of solidarity across racial lines in the fight for equality.

Eleanor Roosevelt, the longest-serving First Lady of the United States, used her platform to champion social justice causes. Her commitment to human rights and equality was evident in her public statements, writings, and actions. Eleanor Roosevelt’s advocacy for racial equality was groundbreaking for a First Lady. She frequently spoke out against racial discrimination and used her influence to promote civil rights. Roosevelt’s support for anti-lynching legislation and her efforts to desegregate the armed forces were significant steps towards achieving racial justice. After her tenure as First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt continued her advocacy on the global stage. She played a crucial role in drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a delegate to the United Nations. Her work in promoting human rights and equality left an indelible mark on both national and international efforts to protect fundamental freedoms.

The efforts of Pearl S. Buck, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, and Eleanor Roosevelt laid a solid foundation for the civil rights movements that followed. Their unwavering commitment to justice and equality inspired future generations of activists, including Martin Luther King Jr. The legacies of Buck, Du Bois, and Roosevelt continue to resonate in contemporary civil rights movements. Their work serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for equality and the importance of sustained advocacy. As the fight for civil rights and social justice continues, the contributions of these early advocates provide valuable lessons and inspiration. In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. was among the winners of the Anisfield-Wolf Award. The committee consisted of Dr. Ashley Montagu, Pearl Buck, Lillian Smith, and Professor Oscar Handlin. The Anisfield-Wolf Book Awards, established in 1935 by poet and philanthropist Edith Anisfield Wolf, recognize books that have made important contributions to understanding racism and diversity. By the 1960s, the award had gained significant prestige, honoring works that promoted racial understanding and social justice.

The issues addressed by Buck, Du Bois, and Roosevelt remain relevant today. Systemic racism, discrimination, and inequality persist, requiring continued efforts to achieve true equality. The principles and values championed by these pioneers serve as a guiding light for ongoing civil rights advocacy.

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