**Pauli Murray: The Episcopal saint who fought Jim and Jane Crow**

**Denise Oliver Velez** for *Daily Kos*
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attribution: screenshot "Pauli."- The Pauli Murray Project, Brett Cook

'Pauli Murray in the World' - mural in Durham, North Carolina

Visitors to Durham, North Carolina, may see an unfamiliar face in the murals painted on walls throughout the city by *Face Up: Telling Stories of Community Life*, a collaborative public art project led by artist Brett Cook.

It is the face of Anna Pauline (Pauli) Murray, civil and women's rights activist, feminist, attorney, poet, queer, author, and the first black woman to be ordained as an Episcopal priest on Jan. 8, 1977 at the Washington National Cathedral. Murray died in 1985 and in 2012, in honor of her life, activism and service, the Episcopal Church raised her to the pantheon of saints:

> Saints in the Episcopal Church serve a different purpose than in the Catholic Church, where they are intercessors on behalf of praying Catholics. In the Episcopal Church, the selected individuals are seen as exemplary members of the church's "communion of saints," of which all members are part ... Church members call them to mind as a source of ongoing inspiration.

Were I to give her a saint name, it would be "Saint Intersectionality," since Murray represents multiple racial identities and was also gender fluid.

In Brittney Cooper's piece for Salon titled "Black, queer, feminist, erased from history: Meet the most important legal scholar you've likely never heard of," she wrote:

> Pauli Murray is one of the most pivotal figures in 20th century African-American civil rights history, but beyond academic circles, she is not very well known. In 1944, she graduated as the valedictorian of her Howard University law class, producing a senior

thesis titled “Should the *Civil Rights Cases* and *Plessy* Be Overruled?” Trained by William Howard Hastie and Leon Ransom at Howard, Pauli Murray had been witness to their early legal strategy of combating separate but equal doctrine by forcing states to either make black institutions equal to their white counterparts or integrate white institutions, if they failed to do so. However, she argued that Plessy v. Ferguson was inherently immoral and discriminatory and should be overturned. When she brought up this argument to her classmates, she noted that her suggestion was received with “hoots of derisive laughter.” Murray coined the term “Jane Crow” to name the forms of sexist derision she frequently encountered during her time at Howard. It was the piece she co-authored in 1965 called “Jane Crow and the Law” that Ginsburg cites as so influential in her thinking about legal remedies for sex discrimination.

Cooper went on to speak of Murray’s gender identity:

...it is not just racism and sexism that shaped her experiences as an attorney, activist and civil rights leader in the early to mid-20th century. Pauli Murray was a gender nonconforming person, who favored a masculine-of-center gender performance during her 20s and 30s. She struggled both with her sense of gender identity and with her sexual attraction to women. She asked doctors to administer male hormones to her in the 1930s, and tried to convince one doctor to perform exploratory surgery to see if she had “secreted male genitals.”

In today’s terms, she very probably would have embraced transgender identity, and might have identified as a trans* man. That terminology was not available to Murray in the 1930s and 1940s, since it was not invented until the 1950s. Like so many other facets of Murray’s life, she was a couple of decades ahead of her time. Throughout her life she chose to openly pursue passionate, romantic partnerships and friendships with women. She was never in the closet; her family and friends and other civil rights leaders knew of her queer identity.

Rev. Dr. Pauli Murray. b. November 20, 1910 d. July 1, 1985

Still not a household name, Murray has been written about here on Daily Kos in the past. ChitownKev wrote "Notes on an 'Imp, Crusader, Dude, Priest,' and Genius, for Black Kos, teacherken penned "Do you know about Pauli Murray? We all should," and Ptolomy expanded a comment he made on Murray in Ken's piece with, "What Yale hath wrought, let no person tear asunder."

Her early history and partial biography:

> Anna Pauline (Pauli) Murray was born in Baltimore on 20th November, 1910. Her mother, Agnes Murray died of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1914. Her father, William Murray, was a graduate of Howard University and taught in a local high school. He suffered from the long-term effects of typhoid fever and eventually was confined to Crownsville State Hospital where he was murdered by a guard in 1923. Pauli went to live with her aunt, Pauline Fitzgerald, an elementary school teacher and her grandparents Robert and Cornelia Fitzgerald in Durham, North Carolina. After graduating from Hillside High School in 1926 with a certificate of distinction, she moved to New York City. Murray attended Hunter College and financed her studies with various jobs. However, after the Wall Street Crash, unable to find work, Murray was forced to abandon her studies. In the 1930s Murray worked for the Works Projects Administration (WPA) and as a teacher in the New York City Remedial Reading Project. She also had articles and poems published in various magazines. This included her novel, Angel of the Desert, that was serialized in the Carolina Times.
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> Murray also became involved in the civil rights movement. In 1938 she began a campaign to enter the all-white University of North Carolina. With the support of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Murray's case received national publicity. However, it was not until 1951 that Floyd McKissick became the first African American to be accepted by the University of North Carolina. During this campaign she developed a life-long friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt. A member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR), Murray also became involved in attempts to end segregation on public transport and this resulted in her arrest and imprisonment in March 1940 for refusing to sit at the back of a bus in Virginia. In 1941 Murray enrolled at the Howard University law school with the intention of becoming a civil rights lawyer. The following year she joined with George Houser, James Farmer and Bayard Rustin, to form the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). Members of CORE were mainly pacifists who had been deeply influenced by Henry David Thoreau and the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi and the nonviolent civil disobedience campaign that he used successfully against British rule in India. The students became convinced that the same methods could be employed by blacks to obtain civil rights in America. In 1943 Murray published two

important essays on civil rights, Negroes Are Fed Up in Common Sense and an article about the Harlem race riot in the socialist newspaper, New York Call. Her most famous poem on race relations, Dark Testament, was also written in that year. The poem was published as a part of a larger collection of her work in 1970 by Silvermine Press.

After Murray graduated from Howard University in 1944 she wanted to enroll at Harvard University to continue her law studies. In her application for a Rosenwald Fellowship, she listed Harvard as her first choice. She was awarded the prestigious fellowship but after the award had been announced, Harvard Law School rejected her because of her gender. Murray went to the University of California Boalt School of Law where she received a degree in law. Her master's thesis was The Right to Equal Opportunity in Employment. Murray moved to New York City and provided support to the growing civil rights movement. Her book, States' Laws on Race and Color, was published in 1951. Thurgood Marshall, head of the legal department at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), described the book as the Bible for civil rights lawyers. In the early 1950s Murray, like many African Americans involved in the civil rights movement, suffered from McCarthyism. In 1952 she lost a post at Cornell University because the people who had supplied her references: Eleanor Roosevelt, Thurgood Marshall and Philip Randolph, were considered to be too radical. She was told in a letter that they decided to give "one hundred per cent protection" to the university "in view of the troublous times in which we live".

Murray was also a co-founder of National Organization for Women (NOW):

A civil rights worker, feminist activist, lawyer, poet, author, and teacher, who became an Episcopal priest at age 66, Dr. Pauli Murray helped convince Betty Friedan that the country needed an "NAACP for women." Murray was the only woman in her 1944 graduating class at Howard University, and was rejected by Harvard Law School because she was female. In 1965, Murray was the first African American to be awarded a doctorate in Juridical Science from Yale, and that same year, she declared that, "If it becomes necessary to march on Washington to assure equal job opportunities for all, I hope women will not flinch from the thought." Ruth Bader Ginsburg, now a Supreme Court justice, credited Pauli Murray and Dorothy Kenyon with the Fourteenth Amendment legal theories that Ginsburg used successfully in the 1970's to advance women's rights. Murray was the author of many of NOW's early documents and contributed to the visionary NOW Statement of Purpose.

I hope that some of the people attending the Women's March on Washington on Jan. 21 (or sister marches in cities across the U.S.) will carry banners or posters in her name and memory.

My New Year's resolution was to share more black history with a wider audience. Murray represents that history and expands the boundaries for women's and LGBTQ history, as well. There's no reason for it all to be crammed into specific months dedicated to those topics, though I support their existence. Murray's history is inextricably linked to our present.

After the mass shooting in Orlando last year, the Rev. Dr. William Barber, president of the North Carolina NAACP, architect of the Moral Mondays Movement, and member of the Repairers of the Breach, wrote an op ed titled "We Cannot Let Hate Have the First, Last, or Loudest Word."

*Whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. He does not know where he is* going, *because the darkness has blinded his eyes.* — John 2:11

Tears are the order of the day. We mourn the loss of life. We grieve the destruction and the hurt and pain of so many in Orlando and across the nation.

Many of our slaughtered and maimed brothers and sisters were members of the LGBTQ community. But, in a larger sense, in a better sense, we must say from our hearts, they were from our community. They remain members of our human family of love; in death, as they were in life, children of God, and we weep as one family.

In the same piece, he cited Pauli Murray while speaking of the history of hate in the U.S.:

In 1943 alone, America saw 242 major racial clashes in 47 cities, with full-blown race riots in Detroit, Los Angeles, and Mobile. In Beaumont, Texas, several hundred whites burned and looted the black section and killed two men. In Detroit, white mobs roamed the city attacking black people, leaving 34 dead—25 black and 9 white—as white police joined the mobs. Pauli Murray wrote: "Is this the brand of democracy we are asked to die for?"

There's no doubt that if Murray was still living she would be part of and at the vanguard of this growing fusion movement for democracy, civil, and human rights.

Thanks in part to the tireless work of the Duke Humanities Center's Pauli Murray Project, we are now reaping the rewards of learning more about Murray, her life, history, and impact.

A documentary short about three spoken word artists discussing the life and influence of Civil Rights pioneer Pauli Murray.

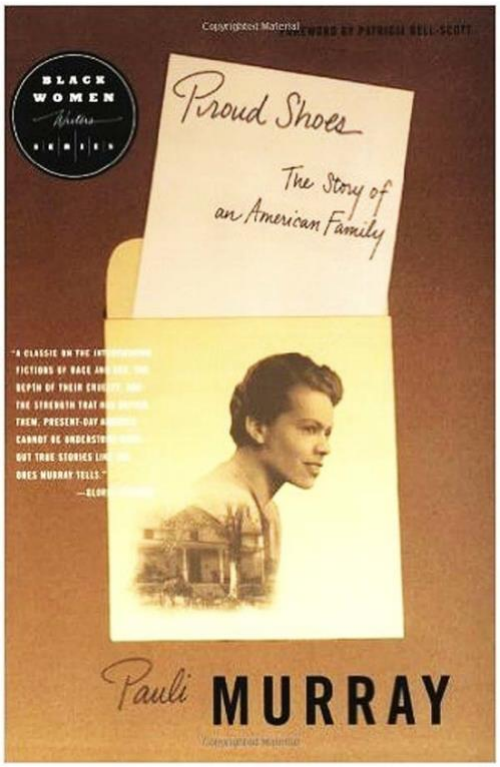
Barbara Lau is the project director of the Pauli Murray Project.

Barbara connects her commitment to justice with her belief in the power of community organizing. She is also the lead developer of the Pauli Murray Center for History and Social Justice, a newly formed non-profit organization focused on transforming Murray's childhood home into a center for history, education, the arts and social mobilization.

Lau's 20 years experience as a folklorist, curator, professor, oral historian, media producer and author includes curating the exhibition *Pauli Murray: Imp, Crusader, Dude, Priest*; producing *To Buy the Sun*, an original play about Pauli Murray; co-directing the *Face Up: Telling Stories of Community Life* community mural project; and teaching documentary courses about Durham and LGBTQ history and culture.
Work is currently underway preserving the home of Murray's grandfather.

The house built in 1898 by Pauli Murray's grandfather, Robert Fitzgerald, was a place that nurtured Pauli Murray and her many fights for freedom and continues to inspire others today, like Durham architect Patricia Harris.
There is currently a wealth of excellent reading material available, written by and aboutPauli Murray.

*Proud Shoes* is Pauli Murray's autobiography:




First published in 1956, *Proud Shoes* is the remarkable true story of slavery, survival, and miscegenation in the South from the pre-Civil War era through the Reconstruction. Written by Pauli Murray the legendary civil rights activist and one of the founders of NOW, *Proud Shoes* chronicles the lives of Murray's maternal grandparents. From the birth of her grandmother, Cornelia Smith, daughter of a slave whose beauty incited the master's sons to near murder to the story of her grandfather Robert Fitzgerald, whose

free black father married a white woman in 1840, *Proud Shoes*offers a revealing glimpse of our nation's history.

Reviews

"A classic on the intertwining fictions of race and sex, the depth of their cruelty, and the strength that has defied them. Present-day America cannot be understood without true stories like the ones Murray tells." —Gloria Steinem "Pauli Murray is one of the founding leaders of the modern American women's movement, and I am glad to see her wonderful book in print again." —Betty Friedan

"Moving and remarkable…. *Proud Shoes* traps the beast of American slavery, in particular, the strange and tragic domestic struggle between master and slave, and the ironic 'gift of white blood' that still nourishes and suffocates many Americans." —Jack Hicks, *The Nation*

While researching *Proud Shoes*, I found an interesting bit of photographic history.


Title: Miss Pauli Murray, author of "Proud Shoes" presents a first copy of her new book to Lloyd K. Garrison, former president of the National Urban League [...] Standing, left to right in front of a poster of Adlai Stevenson: Sylvia Ravich, Lloyd K. Garrison, Pauli Murray, and Dr. Frank Horn

Having just written a piece on abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, I was curious about the Lloyd K. Garrison in the photo, wondering if there was a connection. My hunch was correct. His *New York Times* obituary explained his links to civil rights interests.

Mr. Garrison was the great-grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist, and the grandson of Wendell Phillips Garrison, the literary editor of The Nation. His father, Lloyd

McKim Garrison, a lawyer, and his mother, Alice Kirkham Garrison, were pillars of New York society.

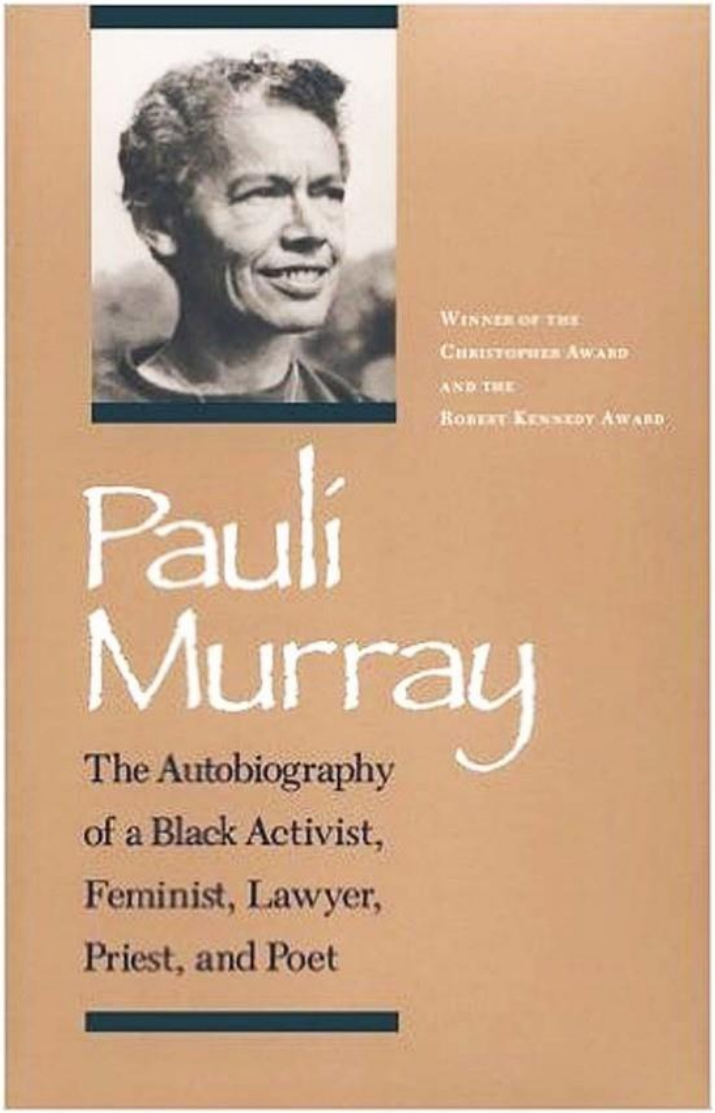
...

In the early 1950's, Mr. Garrison, as a member of the Democratic Reform Movement in New York City, played a significant role in ousting Carmine DeSapio as the county Democratic leader. In national politics he was a stalwart supporter of the Presidential candidacy of Mr. Stevenson, a longtime friend. Mr. Garrison joined the National Urban League in 1924, which he said opened his eyes to the realities of racial discrimination in America, and was its president from 1947 to 1952. That commitment remained through the decades.

In 1968 after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mr. Garrison wrote a letter to The New York Times in which he stated that Dr. King "in the last years of his life" realized that "civil rights legislation and court decisions were not enough to wipe out discrimination and inequality; that the ravages of poverty had to be dealt with on a massive scale; (and) that the cleansing and transformation of the our inner cities was the first order of business and the establishment of peace was indissolubly linked with these objectives."

In the early 1950's, Mr. Garrison, a longtime member of the American Civil Liberties Union, defended the poet Langston Hughes and the playwright Arthur Miller when they were summoned by Senator Joseph McCarthy before the House un-American Acitivities Committee. And he defended J. Robert Oppenheimer when the Atomic Energy Commission -- for whom Mr. Garrison had been a special consultant in the 1940's -- sought to remove Mr. Oppenheimer's security clearance.

Second on my book list for today is *Pauli Murray: The Autobiography of a Black Activist, Feminist, Lawyer, Priest, and Poet*.




Her autobiography was originally published as *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage*:

*Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage* is a thoughtful, considered autobiography written by a mature woman practiced in historical analysis and interested in recording the course of her own development within the chronology of twentieth century social history. Murray knew from early childhood that she was born in the same month that the fledgling NAACP began publishing *The Crisis.* Her relatives took pride in the achievements of their race. Orphaned young, she was reared by her Aunt Pauline, a light-skinned teacher who had divorced her lighter-skinned husband when he decided to cross the color line and practice law as a white man. By the time she reached adolescence,

Murray had also learned that extra effort and persistence were needed even to reach the starting line. Determined not to attend a segregated college, she did an extra year of high school in New York in order to gain admission to Hunter College; even so, she studied late every night to make up for the deficiencies of her southern schooling.

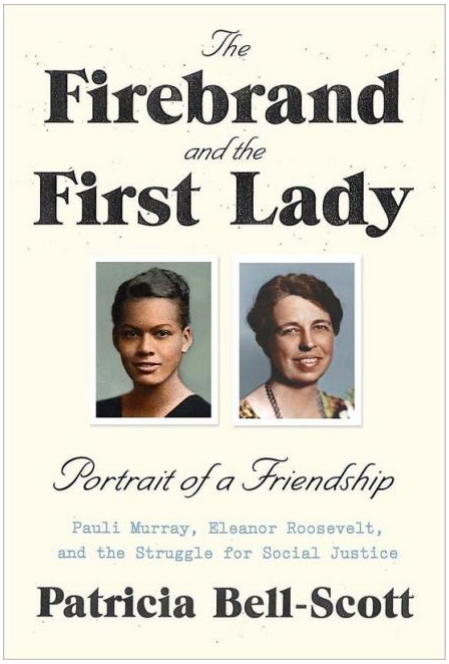
Murray had only one carefree year at Hunter before the Depression crashed down. Living at the Harlem YWCA with other women who worked and went to college, she suffered malnutrition despite a waitress job. In the summer of 1931, she rode the rails from California to the East, dressed in Scout pants and passing as a boy for the sake of safety. Through most of the 1930's, she was unemployed or barely employed. A spell with the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Worker's Education…
Paula Giddings reviewed the autobiography for *The Nation* in an article titled "Fighting Jane Crow."

She joined with the Workers Defense League in their unsuccessful attempt to save a Black sharecropper from execution for killing his white landlord, who had threatened and cheated him. In the 1940s, she came in second in a New York City Council race from Brooklyn's 10th Senatorial District; she later taught at the Ghana Law School and at Brandeis. Even more compelling than these palpable achievements is her political activism, which challenged the exclusion of Blacks and women before the issue became an acknowledged item on the national agenda. Murray fought for integration even before it was a goal of civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which until the 19S0s concentrated on the "equal" of the separate-but-equal doctrine. In 1938, when the NAACP was bringing court cases showing the inequality of Black and white educational institutions, Murray applied to the all-white University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. When she was rebuffed, she turned the application into a campaign, which probably hastened the entrance of the first Blacks there in 1951. Ironically, she also inadvertently abetted the development of the all-Black state school, then the North Carolina College for Negroes. "Every time Pauli writes a letter to the University of North Carolina," commented a friend and editor of the *Carolina Times*, "they get a new building at the Negro college in Durham."

In 1940, Murray and a friend refused to go to the back of a Virginia bus; they were arrested, jailed, and fined and became two of the earliest practitioners of the jail-no-bail strategy that would gain currency 20 years later. Her defiance, she wrote, also predated the period when "respectable people went to jail." And while a student at Howard, she participated in the sit-in movement to desegregate Washington, D.C.'s restaurants and other public facilities, foreshadowing the mass movement of the 1960s.

It was at Howard, Murray writes, that she learned "to wage an effective struggle against Jim Crow." It was also at that institution, the acknowledged leader in civil rights law, that she became conscious of sexism, or "Jane Crow" as she called it. As one of the few women law students there, she found herself the object not of hostility but of ridicule. On her first day of classes she was shocked to hear her professor announce, to the derisive laughter of the male students, that he didn't know why women went to law school, but that since they were there, he guessed the men would have to put up with them. She responded with steely silence. "The professor didn't know it," she later wrote, "but he had just guaranteed that I would be the top student in his class. "He had also guaranteed that Murray would be a feminist pioneer as well as a civil rights activist. Upon her graduation from Howard with honors, she applied to Harvard Law School, which had yet to admit women. Another campaign ensued, which included a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt. (She already had a relationship with the First Lady, which had begun through correspondence, sometimes in angry tones about some injustice or Roosevelt's own gradualist racial views—and developed into occasional invitations for lunch or tea at the White House.) Though Murray would again be rebuffed, she must have felt some satisfaction to learn that Franklin Roosevelt had been enjoined to write to the Harvard president on her behalf, and that the law faculty had split 7-7 on her application.

Her relationship to Eleanor Roosevelt is explored in *The Firebrand and the First Lady—Portrait of a Friendship: Pauli Murray, Eleanor Roosevelt, and the Struggle for Social Justice* by Patricia Bell-Scott.



A groundbreaking book—two decades in the works—that tells the story of how a brilliant writer-turned-activist, granddaughter of a mulatto slave, and the first lady of the United States, whose ancestry gave her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution, forged an enduring friendship that changed each of their lives and helped to alter the course of race and racism in America.

Pauli Murray first saw Eleanor Roosevelt in 1933, at the height of the Depression, at a government-sponsored, two-hundred-acre camp for unemployed women where Murray was living, something the first lady had pushed her husband to set up in her effort to do what she could for working women and the poor. The first lady appeared one day unannounced, behind the wheel of her car, her secretary and a Secret Service agent her passengers. To Murray, then aged twenty-three, Roosevelt's self-assurance was a symbol of women's independence, a symbol that endured throughout Murray's life.

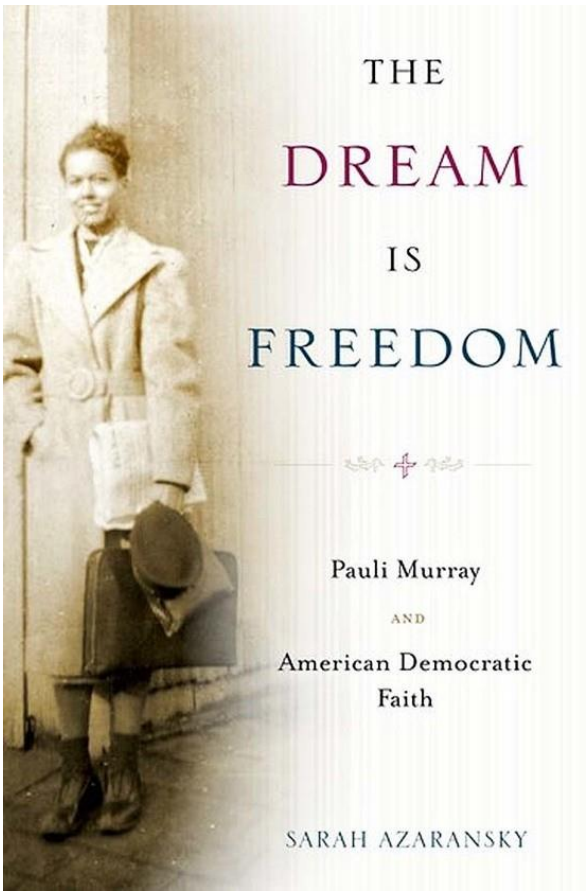
Five years later, Pauli Murray, a twenty-eight-year-old aspiring writer, wrote a letter to Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt protesting racial segregation in the South. The president's staff forwarded Murray's letter to the federal Office of Education. The first lady wrote back.Murray's letter was prompted by a speech the president had given at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, praising the school for its commitment to social progress. Pauli Murray had been denied admission to the Chapel Hill graduate school because of her race. She wrote in her letter of 1938: "Does it mean that Negro students in the South will be allowed to sit down with white students and study a problem which is fundamental and mutual to both groups? Does it mean that the University of North Carolina is ready to open its doors to Negro students . . . ? Or does it mean, that everything you said has no meaning for us as Negroes, that again we are to be set aside and passed over . . . ?"

Eleanor Roosevelt wrote to Murray: "I have read the copy of the letter you sent me and I understand perfectly, but great changes come slowly . . . The South is changing, but don't push too fast."

So began a friendship between Pauli Murray (poet, intellectual rebel, principal strategist in the fight to preserve Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, cofounder of the National Organization for Women, and the first African American female Episcopal priest) and Eleanor Roosevelt (first lady of the United States, later first chair of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and chair of the President's Commission on the Status of Women) that would last for a quarter of a century. Drawing on letters, journals, diaries, published and unpublished manuscripts, and interviews, Patricia Bell-Scott gives us the

first close-up portrait of this evolving friendship and how it was sustained over time, what each gave to the other, and how their friendship changed the cause of American social justice.

Last but not least is theologian Sarah Azaransky's *The Dream Is Freedom: Pauli Murray and American Democratic Faith*.




In the 1940s Murray was in the vanguard of black activists to use nonviolent direct action. A decade before the Montgomery bus boycott, Murray organized sit-ins of segregated restaurants in Washington DC and was arrested for sitting in the front section of a bus in Virginia. Murray pioneered the category Jane Crow to describe discrimination she experienced as a result of racism and sexism. She used Jane Crow in the 1960s to expand equal protection provisions for African American women. A co-founder of the National Organization of Women, Murray insisted on the interrelation of all human rights. Her professional and personal relationships included major figures in the ongoing struggle for civil rights for all Americans, including Thurgood Marshall and Eleanor Roosevelt. In seminary in the 1970s, Murray developed a black feminist critique of emerging black male and white feminist theologies. After becoming the first African American woman Episcopal priest in 1977, Murray emphasized the particularity of

African American women's experiences, while proclaiming a universal message of salvation. *The Dream Is Freedom*examines Murray's substantial body of published writings as well personal letters, journals, and unpublished manuscripts. Azaransky traces the development of Murray's thought over fifty years, ranging from Murray's theologically rich democratic criticism of the 1930s to her democratically inflected sermons of the 1980s. Pauli Murray was an innovative democratic thinker, who addressed how Americans can recognize differences, signaled the role of history and memory in shaping democratic character, and called for strategic coalition building to make more justice available for more Americans.

Pauli Murray's message is one we need to heed in the world we face, and for the future many of us are fighting to build against the odds we confront daily

One of Murray's most well-known quotes is still especially appropriate today: "True community is based upon equality, mutuality, and reciprocity. It affirms the richness of individual diversity as well as the common human ties that bind us together."