

# Doris Miller: Pearl Harbor and the Birth of the Civil Rights Movement

On December 7, 1941, the United States was attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor. In the midst of the chaos and devastation, one African-American man emerged as a hero: Doris Miller.



## Doris Miller, Pearl Harbor, and the Birth of the Civil Rights Movement (Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series Book 158) by Thomas W. Cutrer

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 9358 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 162 pages  
Screen Reader : Supported



Miller was a mess attendant, a low-ranking job in the Navy. But when the attack came, he refused to stay below decks. He ran to the anti-aircraft guns and began firing at the Japanese planes. He also helped to carry wounded sailors to safety.

Miller's actions were recognized by the Navy, which awarded him the Navy Cross, the second-highest honor for valor in combat. He was also promoted to petty officer third class, becoming the first African-American to hold that rank.

Miller's heroism helped to break down barriers of race and segregation in the United States military. It also inspired the Civil Rights Movement, which fought to end discrimination and segregation in American society.

## **Early Life**

Doris Miller was born in Waco, Texas, on October 12, 1919. He was the son of sharecroppers, and he grew up in poverty. Miller attended school only through the eighth grade, and he worked a variety of jobs before joining the Navy in 1940.

Miller was assigned to the USS West Virginia, a battleship. He worked as a mess attendant, a job that was typically given to African-Americans in the Navy. Miller was not happy with his job, but he did it well. He was a hard worker, and he was always willing to help others.

## **Pearl Harbor**

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Miller was below decks when the attack began. He heard the explosions and the gunfire, and he knew that his ship was under attack.

Miller ran to the anti-aircraft guns and began firing at the Japanese planes. He also helped to carry wounded sailors to safety. Miller's actions were heroic, and he was awarded the Navy Cross for his bravery.

## **After Pearl Harbor**

After Pearl Harbor, Miller became a national hero. He was promoted to petty officer third class, and he was given a ticker-tape parade in New York City. Miller's heroism helped to break down barriers of race and segregation in the United States military.

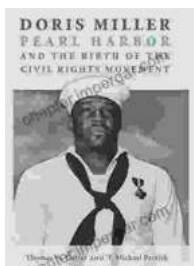
Miller continued to serve in the Navy until 1945. He was discharged with the rank of chief petty officer. After the war, Miller worked as a chef and a custodian. He died in 1996 at the age of 76.

## Legacy

Doris Miller was a true American hero. His actions at Pearl Harbor helped to break down barriers of race and segregation in the United States military and society. Miller's legacy continues to inspire people today.

There are many memorials to Doris Miller. The USS Miller (FF-1091), a frigate, is named in his honor. There is also a statue of Miller at the Pearl Harbor National Memorial.

Doris Miller's story is a reminder that anyone can make a difference. Even in the darkest of times, there are always people who are willing to stand up for what is right.



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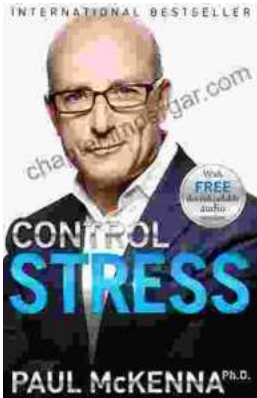
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