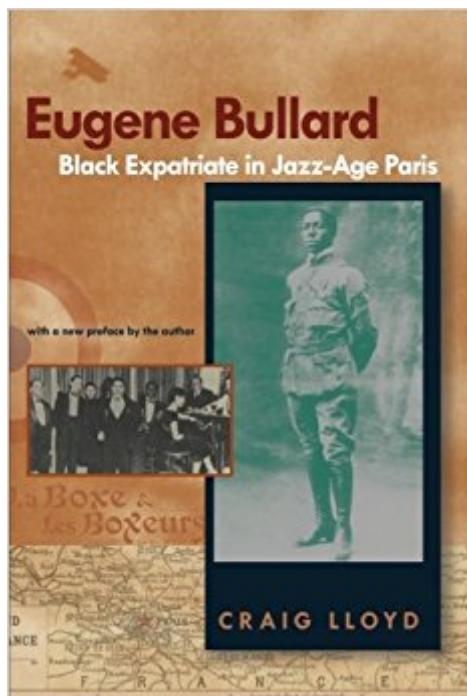


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# Eugene Bullard, Black Expatriate In Jazz-Age Paris



## Synopsis

Although he was the first African American fighter pilot, Eugene J. Bullard is still a relative stranger in his homeland. An accomplished professional boxer, musician, club manager, and impresario of Parisian nightlife between the world wars, Bullard found in Europe a degree of respect and freedom unknown to blacks in America. There, for twenty-five years, he helped define the expatriate experience for countless other African American artists, writers, performers, and athletes. This is the first biography of Bullard in thirty years and the most complete ever. It follows Bullard's lifelong search for respect from his poor boyhood in Jim-Crow Georgia to his attainment of notoriety in Jazz-Age Paris and his exploits fighting for his adopted country, for which he was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Drawing on a vast amount of archival material in the United States, Great Britain, and France, Craig Lloyd unfolds the vibrant story of an African American who sought freedom overseas. Lloyd provides a new look at the black expatriate community in Paris, taking readers into the cabarets where Bullard rubbed elbows with Josephine Baker, Louis Armstrong, and even the Prince of Wales. Lloyd also uses Bullard's life as a lens through which to view the racism that continued to dog him even in Europe in his encounters with traveling Americans. When Hitler conquered France, Bullard was wounded in action and then escaped to America. There, his European successes counted for little: he spent his last years in obscurity and hardship but continued to work for racial justice. Eugene Bullard, Black Expatriate in Jazz-Age Paris offers a fascinating look at an extraordinary man who lived on his own terms and adds a new facet to our understanding of the black diaspora.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lloyd (history, Columbus State Univ.) explores the extraordinary life of Eugene Bullard (1895-1961), the first black wartime aviator and celebrated prize fighter, musician, and decorated member of the French foreign legion and the French airforce in World War I. Beginning with his birth in Georgia, the author charts Bullard's boyhood, his flight from home, and his emigration to Scotland and then to Paris as a stowaway in 1912. There, in the city's tolerant racial climate, Bullard soaked up the cabaret scene and mingled with jazz stars Sidney Bechet and Josephine Baker. Lloyd continues with Bullard's role in the French fight against Nazism during World War II and his flight to New York in 1940, where he battled racism until his death and was awarded the Croix de Guerre. Providing excellent background material, especially about Paris after World War I, Lloyd adds substantially to Bullard's unpublished memoirs and the thinly researched first biography of Bullard by P.J. Carisella and James W. Ryan, *The Black Swallow of Death* (1972. o.p.). He provides a solid monograph for scholars that will serve as the definitive biography of a remarkable man in search of freedom. DDave Szatmary, Univ. of Washington, Seattle Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Lloyd, a history professor, takes the life of an exceptional individual and explores his universe, one with which we are generally familiar as Americans, from an unusual perspective. At the end of the nineteenth century, Bullard escaped the Jim Crow practices of his native Georgia and stowed away in a ship bound for Germany. He reinvented himself in Europe, becoming a prize fighter, dance-troupe entertainer, and jazz band drummer as he traveled between Berlin, Paris, and Moscow. He settled in France, adopting its culture and fighting on its behalf in World War I, even earning citizenship with his heroism as a fighter pilot. But the presence and prejudice of white American soldiers when the U.S. entered the war provided Bullard with painful reminders of the racism he left behind him. Still, Bullard prevailed, becoming a popular Jazz Age entertainer and working for the French Resistance during World War II. Though he died in relative obscurity in the U.S., Bullard is celebrated among the French, who accepted him as one of their own. Vernon Ford Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Craig Lloyd's work is the most comprehensive I've seen on Eugene Bullard and incorporates Jamie

Cockfield's research as well. This is my go-to book for Bullard who was the first African American fighter pilot (WWI), flying for France. Lloyd takes you from Columbus, GA, through parts of the southeast, and to Europe and back as the reader journeys through Bullard's action-packed life. An important historical work, especially for those studying WWI aviation, African Americans serving in foreign military units, or African American history.

As a recently retired teacher of French and history in a school for high-achieving kids, I have long been aware of the role African-American soldiers played during World War I. At a time when these men were given "grunt" work (unloading ships, digging latrines, etc.) by the U.S. Army in France, the French were welcoming them with open arms. New York's 369th Regiment were given over to French command and fought valiantly, becoming the most decorated Allied outfit of WW I - decorated, that is, by the French, who so appreciated their efforts that they (French) burned in public a directive signed by General Pershing recommending that the French soldiers not fraternize with the "Negroes," and especially not allow them to date white Frenchwomen! Eugene Bullard (born 1895) had been told by his father in racist South Carolina that there existed a country where the black man knew a freedom and a dignity that he did not know in his native land. As a young boy, Eugene made his way to Scotland, England and then France. He earned a living by boxing and when the war broke out he joined the French army. He was wounded at the front and eventually, after the war, opened up a jazz bar and restaurant in Paris. He was joined by members of the 369th, known by then as the 'Harlem Hellfighters,' many of whom had been musicians in New York before they were drafted. Although jazz had been considered 'jungle music' back home, after the war, well-heeled American tourists rediscovered it in Paris and brought jazz back to the States where it became all the rage. When WW II broke out, Bullard, now in his mid-40s, once again joined the French army. Learning that the Nazis had a price on his head, he fled to Lisbon and then sailed home. He actually became an elevator operator in the NBC building in New York and remained obscure until President Charles de Gaulle learned, during a good-will trip to the U.S., of Bullard's existence and invited him to a gala festival at the French Consulate. This led to an appearance by Bullard on the Today Show, then hosted by Dave Garroway, who was stunned to learn that the man who greeted the NBC staff every morning in his elevator had such a heroic history. This well-written book takes the reader back through the first half of the 20th Century with a terrific insight into the First World War, the relentless, mindless racism that raged during that era, Paris in the '20s (many American ex-pats are mentioned in the text) and the difference between the French and American cultures of those times. I recommend this highly!

An American hero you won't learn about in history books. Make America Great by learning the truth about its history.

Eugene Bullard is not a house-hold name in the US, but he should be. It is not because he was the son of a poor sharecropper from Columbus, Georgia nor his escape from Jim Crow on a tramp steamer to Scotland. It is what he did with himself and his life in the face of relentless American racial discrimination when he got to Europe. It is because of his love for justice; his desire to defend the French values of democracy and liberty; his valor at Verdun; his bravery in air combat; his armed defense of his little daughters and France against the Nazis invasion. Recipient of 15 military awards including the Croix de Guerre, he was much only later promoted to the rank of lieutenant in the USAF - a position he was denied in WWI because he was black. This book is the most thorough and well-research biography of his life, backing up its key assertions with multiple references and explaining the controversies with even-handedness based on historical texts. You should buy this book, America.

This is an important story that needs to be more widely told. The writing style is thick and seems more carefully academic than it needs to be. It might be a better fictional novel in order to get the important points across with regard to the continuing racism of the US and how it even pervaded France from US tourists through the racism encountered when he returned to the US. Regardless, it is an incredible story worth reading and I highly recommend it. I also recommend reading Queen Bess about the first black female pilot, Bessie Coleman.

This book gives you the opportunity to get a feeling of what your life may have been like living in the Jim Crow era of Georgia. My name is Bullard and I am a white genealogist. Eugene Bullard was the son of ex-slaves that were owned by a family named Bullard. It is fabulous to see a black person rise out of impossible circumstances to become an expatriate combat pilot in the French Air Force during World War I. Jazz and Blues is what I listen to every day and the Jazz story in this book is very interesting to me.

A story of courage and adventure.

This book should be read by all.

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