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**Literature and Human Rights: The Fight against Gender and Racial
Discrimination in the Fiction of Buchi Emecheta and Caryl Phillips**



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ABSTRACT

The aim of my thesis is to analyse the contribution of literature to advancing human rights. The role of literature is to make the theoretical concept of human rights less abstract. I chose novels by two internationally acclaimed writers to highlight how literature can function as a medium of social and political protest. In particular, the works chosen depict gender and racial discrimination as on-going human rights violations. By focusing on *Second-Class Citizen* and *In the Ditch* by the Nigerian-British writer Buchi Emecheta, I draw attention to the plight of black women in African and British society. By discussing the novels *A Distant Shore* and *In the Falling Snow* by the Caribbean-British author Caryl Phillips, I highlight the deeply rooted racial prejudice in British society and the reaction of the English people to the contemporary wave of refugees. My objective is to demonstrate that literature reflects human rights abuses and violations, foregrounding at the same time individual suffering. Literature is a space to express the grievances of the marginalised and to assert their human status and dignity. Therefore, it is an ideal forum for political debate and activism.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Methodology	5
Part One – HISTORICAL CONTEXT	7
CHAPTER ONE – ‘Race Relations’ in Britain	7
1.1. Britain’s reaction to black immigration	7
1.2. Change of attitudes?	9
CHAPTER TWO – The Role of Literature in Human Rights	12
2.1. The role of literature	12
2.2. Women’s rights as human rights	17
Part Two – TWO POWERFUL VOICES: BUCHI EMECHETA AND CARYL PHILLIPS	19
CHAPTER THREE – Buchi Emecheta	21
3.1. Biography	22
3.2. Emecheta’s aim for writing	23
3.3. <i>Second-Class Citizen</i>	25
3.3.1. Plot summary	25
3.3.2. Human rights violations	26
a) Gender discrimination	26
b) Racial discrimination	31
3.3.3. Advancing human rights	34
a) Social criticism	34
b) Positive models	35
3.4. <i>In the Ditch</i>	37
3.4.1. Plot summary	37
3.4.2. Human rights violations	38
a) Racial discrimination	38
b) Gender discrimination	40
3.4.3. Advancing human rights	41
a) Social criticism	41
b) Positive visions	44
c) Intercultural dialogue	47
d) Restoring human dignity	49
3.5. Concluding observations	50

CHAPTER FOUR – Caryl Phillips	53
4.1. Biography	54
4.2. Phillips's aim for writing	55
4.3. <i>A Distant Shore</i>	58
4.3.1 Plot summary	58
4.3.2. Human rights violations	59
a) Racial discrimination	59
b) Gender discrimination	66
4.3.3. Advancing human rights	68
a) Positive role models?	68
b) Social protest novel	71
c) Voice for the marginalised	72
4.4. <i>In the Falling Snow</i>	74
4.4.1 Plot summary	74
4.4.2. Human rights violations	75
a) Racial discrimination over three generations	75
4.4.3. Consequences	81
a) Identity crisis	81
b) New challenges	82
4.5. Concluding observations	82
Conclusion	85
Bibliography	89