

# ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

b. October 11, 1884

d. November 7, 1962

## FIRST LADY

**Eleanor Roosevelt served as a delegate to the United Nations, where she was elected chairwoman of the Commission on Human Rights. In that role, she helped draft the influential Universal Declaration on Human Rights.**

*“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”*

Eleanor Roosevelt transformed the role of First Lady. She served as a diplomat and a tireless champion of international human rights.

Roosevelt was born into a wealthy family in New York City. Both her parents died before she was 10; thereafter, she moved in with her grandmother in upstate New York. At the age of 15, she lived in England, where she learned to speak French and Italian fluently.

Shortly after her return to New York, Roosevelt met her future husband, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, her father's fifth cousin. Franklin was attending Columbia Law School. The couple married and had six children, five of whom survived infancy. Franklin took his first leap into politics, winning a seat in the New York State Senate. The family moved to Washington, D.C., when he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy by President Wilson.

Life in the nation's capital kindled Eleanor's interests in policy making. In 1924, she joined the board of the League of Women Voters and became involved in Democratic Party politics. In 1928, after her husband was elected governor of New York, she became actively engaged in domestic and international issues. She wrote a syndicated newspaper column titled "My Day."

In 1933, Roosevelt became First Lady of the United States, a role she held for 12 years. While she assumed traditional duties, she did not allow them to compromise her ideals. In 1939, she announced in her column that she would resign her membership in the Daughters of the American Revolution, after the group refused to allow Marian Anderson, a black singer, to perform in Washington's Constitution Hall. "The basic fact of segregation," Roosevelt wrote, "is itself discriminatory."

While First Lady, Roosevelt developed an intimate relationship with Lorena Hickock, a journalist who covered the White House. The relationship lasted for the rest of Roosevelt's life.

Eleanor Roosevelt's commitment to public service continued after her husband's death in 1945. President Truman named her a delegate to the United Nations, where she was elected chairwoman of the Commission on Human Rights. In that position, she helped draft the influential Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

Roosevelt was a member of the Board of Trustees of Brandeis University and delivered the school's first commencement address. She also authored several children's books. In her lifetime, she received many civic awards and honorary degrees.



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