Eleanor Roosevelt at 125

by Allida Black

Eleanor Roosevelt understood, more than most American leaders, the challenges America would confront at the end of the twentieth century.

She grew increasingly concerned that American foreign policy would continue to be defined by what we "aren't," rather than what we "are." She warned America that our education system needed to address politics and cultures we did not understand if the nation was to continue to be a force for peace. She feared that our health care system, if not expanded and made affordable, would exclude those who could not afford medical care and thus lead to a "society of have and have-nots." She worried that Americans "had become so intoxicated by our new methods of communication that we have failed to look closely at just what we are communicating —of failing to communicate." She urged her fellow citizens to remember that freedom from fear cannot be divorced from freedom from want.

"For where there is no vision the people perish."

In 1962, as ER battled fatal illness, she also sought to complete her final call to action. In *Tomorrow is Now*, she dared us to recognize the power we had as citizens and to use our power carefully and boldly. "I would like to see," she wrote, "our people fired by the vision of building a new and peaceful world." This could only happen if "we cast out fear and face the unknown . . . with imagination and integrity, with courage and a high heart."

Why? "For where there is no vision the people perish."

ER urged Americans to be ready to "hazard all we have"-to "pledge our lives, our sacred honor, and all our worldly goods"to fulfill the promise that democracy and human rights present. These two "enduring values" possess the "overwhelming power" essential for American security and prosperity. Repeatedly, she argued:

We must fan the spark of conviction, which may again inspire the world as we did with our new idea of the dignity and the worth of free men. But first we must learn to cast out fear. People who 'view with alarm' never build anything.

She recognized that new visions would evoke strong emotions and intense political backlash and she wanted the nation to understand that:

Change means the unknown. It means being jolted out of a rut that has grown comfortable and familiar from long residence. It means, too many people cry, insecurity.

Nonsense! No one from the beginning of time has ever had security. . . . Anything is possible. . . . After all, the man who cowers under a tree in a storm, thinking he is secure, merely runs more risk from the lightning.

The time has come for us to cast off our fear like a wornout garment. It clouds the judgment. It paralyzes action. . . .



Eleanor Roosevelt outside of St. James' Church, Hyde Park, New York. April 6, 1952.

ER understood fear-and the dangers it posed—as few Americans had. Her intensely personal relationship to the American people exposed her to the underbelly of the Great Depression and World War II in ways that few Americans experienced. After the White House, she lived and led in the shadow of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb. She survived assassination attempts as the virulence of American racism resurfaced and endured the economic repercussions of speaking out for justice in the era of McCarthyism. When she dared debate the American Bar Association and urge the United States to embrace the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the death threats and hate mail escalated. Bounties were placed on her head. Her critics, including FBI Director, J. Edgar Hoover called her a "communist."



Eleanor Roosevelt in Washington D.C., 1924.

Yet, to an extent I find daunting, she stayed the course, repeatedly telling all who would listen that "we are all on trial to show what democracy means."

As we celebrate Eleanor Roosevelt's 125th birthday, the charges against us and the challenges we face are as intense as those ER faced when she negotiated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

How, in a climate of unforeseen economic downturn, can we help rebuild a global

economy that thrives and comforts? How, in a time of rising unemployment and rampant epidemics that transcend borders, can we insure that Americans' right to health is respected? How, in times of unimaginable horror-where gasoline is poured into women's vaginas and acid thrown in the face of schoolgirls-can we insure that women's rights are finally embraced as human rights? How, in the shadow of war and torture, can we balance respect and defense?

Many would say these problems are unsolvable or that rights are separate from responsibilities or that America should focus on itself first or that the market will sort these solutions out. Nothing would enrage Eleanor Roosevelt more.

This is a woman who dared to see what America could become and dedicated her life to keeping her country on track.

How do we thank someone like that? How can we honor her courage and her love of

I propose that to celebrate ER's 125th birthday, we talk less and act more; that we reach out to those who are different from us and find common ground; that throughout, we be bold, kind, shrewd, and determined; and that when we compromise, we "compromise up."

I also ask you to stand beside those who risk their lives for change, especially with women around the world, who look to ER and to each other, to help build safe, inclusive, and nourishing communities out of the ruins of war, prejudice, and famine.

"The time has come for us to cast off our fear like a worn out garment. It clouds the judgment. It paralyzes action...."

I especially ask you, as the women of the world gather in Geneva this International Human Rights Day to pay tribute to Eleanor Roosevelt, to listen to their vital voices. Respect their visions. Work with them to develop sustainable grassroots programs to feed their neighbors, rebuild their homes, educate their communities, and stop the torture of rape and human trafficking. Realize that change doesn't have to originate in America to work. And that stunning courage and boldness exists "in places so small they don't show up on any map of the world."

ER would demand nothing less. "Staying aloof," she preached," is not a solution; it is a cowardly evasion."

Allida Black is Research Professor of History and International Affairs at The George Washington University; Project Director and Editor of The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers; and a member of the Board of Directors of the Roosevelt Institute. She first registered as a researcher at the Roosevelt Library in 1987. For more information visit www.gwu.edu/~erpapers.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

In honor of Eleanor Roosevelt's 125th birthday, we are dedicating this entire issue to the amazing Mrs. Roosevelt. In October there was a special family gathering in Hyde Park and we produced a new video that is playing continuously in the Wallace Center. It will also be available for loan through our Pare Lorentz Film Center www. parelorentzcenter.org.

In the back of my mind as we were making these preparations, I pondered what precisely I could contribute in this space that would shed new light on Eleanor Roosevelt, a woman whose courage and leadership has been so vividly drawn by so many for so many years.

And then something happened. Mrs. Roosevelt's granddaughter, Anna Eleanor (Ellie) Roosevelt Seagraves, contacted me bearing the sad news that ER's devoted personal secretary, Maureen Corr, was in hospice. A few weeks later, on October 14, Maureen Corr passed away at age 92. She was a vital source of many fond recollections for those of us who have been privileged to know her and she has been generous to the Library, donating many papers and mementoes of Eleanor Roosevelt.



Eleanor Roosevelt with Maureen Corr in Trivandrum during a visit to India, March 5, 1952.

But Ellie was not just letting me know the bad news, she was also asking me, as we prepare to remember Eleanor Roosevelt, to please also remember "the duty and friendship roles of two important people connected with Grandmère. One is Malvina Thompson and the other Maureen Corr. . . . People can't function (or don't function as well) without the devoted detail work provided by first assistants, especially ones who became such devoted friends of ER and of many in her family as well. . . ." Both Maureen and "Tommy" are shown in action in our new video on Eleanor Roosevelt, which was premiered at the family gathering. I would like to ask all of you, our readers, to take a moment and remember these two devoted "first assistants" as well.

Maureen Corr

Maureen Corr was Mrs. Roosevelt's personal secretary from 1953 until ER's death in 1962. She was born in a small town southwest of Belfast, Northern Ireland in 1917. She was seriously ill as a child, and did not receive much education as a result. Maureen moved

(continued on page 2)

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to New York City in 1943, and lived with her sister and brother-in-law while she sought an education. She had to begin at the elementary level since her childhood illnesses had limited her formal education. She persevered and received a Bachelor's Degree in English from Hunter College. After working as a physician's assistant, she obtained her first position with Mrs. Roosevelt in 1950 through an employment agency that had been contacted by Malvina Thompson, who needed an assistant. Maureen took a \$25 per week pay cut for the opportunity to work for Eleanor Roosevelt, and when Tommy died in 1953, Maureen was elevated to personal secretary.

Over the next few years, Maureen traveled extensively with ER to places such as Syria, Lebanon, Yugoslavia, Israel, the Soviet Union, and Japan. After Mrs. Roosevelt's death 1962, Maureen assisted the family with funeral arrangements and closed ER's office. Of her time with Mrs. Roosevelt, Maureen would later say that the most important lesson she learned was "not to be afraid to live."

Malvina "Tommy" Thompson



FDR Presidential Library Eleanor Roosevelt with Malvina Thompson in

Graysville, Illinois, June 1936.

Malvina Thompson served as Eleanor Roosevelt's personal secretary for thirty years. She was born in the Bronx in 1893, the daughter of a locomotive engineer. After high school, she taught herself typing and started a secretarial career. After working for the American Red Cross, in 1922 she took a position with the New York State Democratic Committee, where she worked part-time for ER who was organizing women's activities for Governor Al Smith. Tommy continued to work part time for Eleanor Roosevelt even as she took on full-time work for Louis Howe, FDR and ER's political adviser. She moved to Washington in 1933 when Mrs. Roosevelt became First Lady.

Tommy was more than a secretary and friend to Eleanor Roosevelt. In addition to her secretarial work that often kept her at the White House until midnight or later, she was a close confidante, balancing competing pressures on the First Lady and offering honest criticism.

In order to remain independent, Tommy declined to go out socially with people who might try to use her position of trust. She accompanied ER on most of her travels as First Lady, averaging 40,000 miles a year in the first two terms. She also went with the First Lady on her lengthy wartime journeys to Britain and South America. She continued to serve Mrs. Roosevelt in the post-White House years. She died on April 12, 1953, the eighth anniversary of FDR's death. Afterwards, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote "I learned for the first time what being alone was like."

Cynthia M. Koch November 2009

Eleanor Roosevelt Artifacts Offer Insight into Many Aspects of Her Life

The Museum at the FDR Library houses an extraordinary collection of over 1600 objects related to the life and public career of Eleanor Roosevelt. Among these are nearly 800 items personally linked to her, including objects she wore, made, used, or displayed in her homes. These range from knitting needles to a 1679 silver monteith bowl by Boston silversmith John Coney passed down from her Livingston relatives. Mrs. Roosevelt donated many personal items to the Library. Others have come into the collection through the generosity of family, friends, and other donors.

The breadth and depth of the Eleanor Roosevelt collection offers views into many aspects of her life and career. The range of items represented runs from clothing, household items, china, silverware and furniture to campaign memorabilia, awards, embroidery, handbags, luggage and other travel

items, and gifts. FDR Presidential Library **Eleanor Roosevelt in New Hebrides** during her South Pacific visit, 1943.

Among the many collection highlights are the Red Cross uniform the First Lady wore during her famous tour of the Pacific theater during World War

II (when she saw an estimated 400,000 members of America's armed forces), a 1933 portrait of Mrs. Roosevelt by Otto Schmidt that was FDR's favorite and hung in the family residence at the White House, and the wallet she used during her final years. The contents of the wallet including numerous membership cards, handwritten poems, personal notes, and other materials—speak to the variety of interests, organizations, and causes of its tireless owner.

Another highlight is over thirty pieces of jewelry owned and used by the First Lady. This includes a group of carved coral brooches and a set of tiger claw jewelry she inherited from her mother. Other highlights are Eleanor Roosevelt's 5.2 carat diamond engagement ring and a 44-diamond family heirloom necklace given

to her by a cousin. There is

also a favorite gold locket and

chain she wore on many occasions. It bears the marks of her young

children's teeth.

A number of public gifts to Mrs. Roosevelt are in the collection, including plaques, medals, and other awards honoring her contributions to various causes and organizations. There are also priceless state gifts, such as a jeweled tiara presented by the Sultan of Morocco in 1943.

Another unique portion of the collection is a large group of items produced by Val-Kill Industries, the crafts studio

and factory Eleanor Roosevelt operated with her friends Nancy Cook, Marion Dickerman, and Caroline O'Day on her Val-Kill estate during the 1920s and 1930s. These include a variety of furniture, along with pewter, copper, and silver pieces.



FDR Presidential Library

Eleanor Roosevelt before a radio broadcast in New York City. August 19, 1945.

Fascinating new items continue to come into the collection. In 2005, Mrs. Roosevelt's granddaughter, Eleanor Seagraves, donated a gold fleur-delis brooch that the First Lady wore frequently. Replicas of the brooch are now available for purchase in the Museum's gift shop.

Over fifty items connected to Mrs. Roosevelt were included in a major gift to the Museum in 2008 by her grandson, Curtis Roosevelt. Among these is a photograph case with photographs of the four Roosevelt sons in uniform that the First Lady kept on her bedroom desk during World War II. Another item from Curtis Roosevelt's gift—a pair of monogrammed drinking glasses from Mrs. Roosevelt's New York City apartment on East 74th Street—is currently on display in the Museum.

New Deal Museum Store: Replica Roosevelt Jewelry

In addition to the latest books on the Roosevelts and their times, clothing, gifts for kids, multimedia items, and campaign memorabilia, the New Deal Store offers replicas of museum objects including jewelry worn by the Roosevelts. Visit estore.archives.gov/roosevelt today.



Fleur-de-lis pin. Adapted from the gold fleurde-lis pin that Eleanor Roosevelt often wore. the New Deal Store's reproduction of the pin is 24K gold-plate over pewter with faux-pearls (\$69.95).



"Cuff Links Club" Cuff Links. The New Deal Store offers sterling silver cuff links that are reproductions of those given by FDR to each member of the team of advisors who masterminded his 1920 campaign and became life-long friends. One side has FDR's initials and the other side is blank for custom engraving (\$79.95).

RECENT BOOKS ABOUT THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

BASED ON RESEARCH AT THE ROOSEVELT LIBRARY

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers: Volume 1, the Human Rights Years, 1945-1948 (Thomson Gale, 2007) by Allida Black

Eleanor Roosevelt: Hudson Valley Remembrance (Arcadia, 2005)

FDR's Shadow: Louis Howe, The Force That Shaped Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) by Julie M. Fenster

by Joyce Ghee and Joan Spence

Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way: Timeless Strategies from the First Lady of Courage (Prentice Hall Press, 2003) by Robin Gerber

Women Who Dare: Eleanor Roosevelt (Pomegranate Communications/ Library of Congress, 2006) by Anjelina Michelle Keating

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters to Eleanor Roosevelt through Depression and War (Carroll & Graf Publishers, 2004) by Cathy D. Knepper

Franklin and Lucy: President Roosevelt, Mrs. Rutherfurd, and the Other Remarkable Women in His Life (Random House, 2008) by Joseph Persico

Sara and Eleanor: The Story of Sara Delano Roosevelt and Her Daughter-in-Law, Eleanor Roosevelt (St. Martin's Press, 2004) by Janice Pottker

Too Close to the Sun: Growing Up in the Shadow of My Grandparents, Franklin and Eleanor (Public Affairs, 2008) by Curtis Roosevelt

> Grandmère: A Personal History of Eleanor Roosevelt (Warner Books, 2002) by David B. Roosevelt with Manuela Dunn-Mascetti

Eleanor Roosevelt: A Photographic Story of Life (DK Publishing, 2006) by Kem Knapp Sawyer

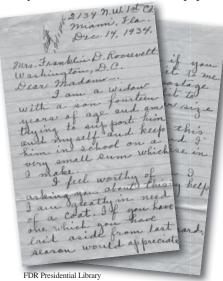
The Roosevelts and the Royals: Franklin and Eleanor, the King and Queen of England, and the Friendship that **Changed History** (John Wiley and Sons, 2004) by Will Swift

Dear First Lady: Letters to the White House from the Collections of the Library of Congress and National Archives (National Geographic, 2008) by Dwight Young and Margaret Johnson

Two Million Pages of Her Life and Career: The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers

Like FDR, Mrs. Roosevelt understood the importance of preserving her papers for future generations. In September 1941—just weeks after the Library's dedication—Library director Fred Shipman wrote to the Archivist of the United States that "The President has directed me to have Mrs. Roosevelt's files . . . sent to this Library as soon as it is convenient." By mid-October, a truck had delivered 30 filing cabinets to the Library containing just her White House correspondence for 1933-1937! Mrs. Roosevelt gave further donations at regular intervals, and by her death in November 1962 the Library had received the bulk of her papers up to 1960. Her own stated wishes resulted in final donations afterwards.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers total over two million pages. They are split fairly evenly into two major sectionsthe Early Years & White House Papers and the Post-White House Papers. Early Years materials include papers,



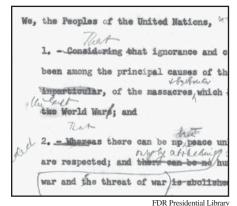
An example of the thousands of personal 1etters to Mrs. Roosevelt from average Americans.

letters and writings of ER's parents, grandparents and other Roosevelt and Hall relatives. Of particular interest are ER's school exercise notebooks and report cards from Allenswood, as well as correspondence from the time FDR contracted polio in 1921. There also is correspondence between ER and the White House Usher prior to March 4, 1933 in which the layout of the White House is discussed and rooms assigned for the new occupants.

The White House Papers are sweeping in their scope. Divided into large series based on the nature of the correspondence, the documents are organized by year and then alphabetically by the name of the person with whom ER corresponded. Fortunately, her staff created an card index (totaling four card catalog cabinets) that provides a road map to these papers.

One of the most important series in this section is Series 70: Correspondence with Government Departments, where documents demonstrating ER's communications with the government on behalf of citizens, soldiers, interned Japanese Americans, and for her own information can be found.

Series 100: Personal Letters, reflects ER's interest in youth, labor, civil liberties, education, refugee assistance, planned communities, the Democratic Party, and other issues of the time. Perhaps the most poignant series in the entire collection is Series 150: Material Assistance Requested. This contains thousands of letters written by average Americans to Mrs. Roosevelt, particularly during the Depression, telling of their plight and requesting



Draft Preamble of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, with ER's handwritten changes, 1947.

some sort of aid, perhaps a little money, or used clothing, or leftover food from the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt believed that each person was entitled to the respect of a reply. Even if she was unable to assist them, she often directed the appropriate New Deal agency to assist.

The Post-White House Papers contain general correspondence files arranged alphabetically in three major chronological groupings: 1945-52, 1953-57, and 1958-1962, including letters with the Trumans and the Kennedys. This section also contains her United Nations Materials including versions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflecting Mrs. Roosevelt's own handwritten comments and changes.

The two main sections of ER's Papers are bridged by the Speech and Article File, which contains drafts, notes, and manuscripts of her extensive writings and public statements.

Together, the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers document the life and career of this remarkable woman and the impact she had on the nation and the world.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, December 5, 2009 **Holiday Open House &** Children's Book Festival FDR Library and Home, Wallace Center 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.



Saturday, January 30, 2010 **FDR Birthday Ceremony** Rose Garden and Wallace Center 3:00 p.m.



Saturday, February 13, 2010 **President's Day Weekend Events:** Presidential Autographs & Lecture Wallace Center 2:00 p.m.



Sunday, April 11, 2010 **Lecture: Mel Marmer** Baseball and the Presidency Wallace Center 2:00 p.m.



Thursday, April 15, 2010 **Book Talk: Robert Klara** FDR's Funeral Train 7:00 p.m.



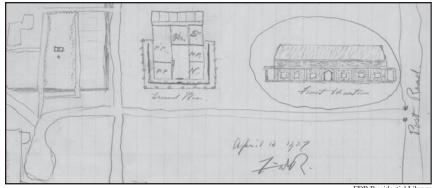
Friday, May 28, 2010 "USO Show" Wallace Center 7:00 p.m.



Saturday, May 29 - Sunday, May 30 **Bivouac - WWII Encampment** FDR Library Lawn 9:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

EMAIL BULLETIN SIGN-UP Visit www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu and click on "SIGN UP Email List"

President Roosevelt Planned for Future Library Expansion



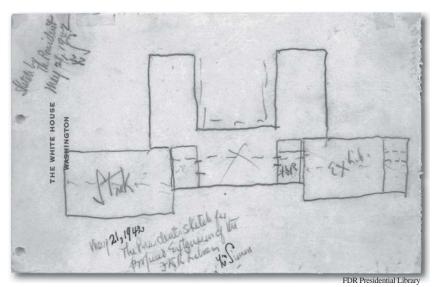
(Detail) FDR's original pencil sketch for the Roosevelt Library and Museum, April 12, 1937.

Franklin D. Roosevelt recognized early on the need for his presidential library to expand. In 1942 he made a sketch (shown below) of simple rectangular additions—to the north and south of the original building—that were realized in 1969 when the library was expanded.

The added wings were designed to reflect the Dutch colonial-style of the 1941 Library structure.

The addition to the north now includes the William J. vanden Heuvel Special Exhibits Gallery on the first floor and the Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr. Research Room on the attic floor.

The Museum's permanent exhibits extend into the south addition on the first floor, with museum staff offices and store rooms for museum objects on the attic floor above.



"The President's Sketch for Proposed Extension of the FDR Library." Includes two major additions to the north and south of the original building. May 21, 1942.

Ice Yachts Will Return to Roosevelt Library Lawn

The Hudson River Ice Yacht Club will once again assemble an outdoor display of Hudson River ice yachts-dating from the late 1800s to the present dayin front of the Roosevelt Library this December. Ice Yacht Club members will be on-hand each day to talk about their boats and the history of ice yachting.

As a young man Franklin Roosevelt enjoyed ice yachting on the Hudson River and his uncle, John Aspinwall Roosevelt, founded the Hudson River Ice Yacht Club in 1869.

The display is sponsored by the Hudson River Ice Yacht Club in partnership with the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt NHS, the FDR Presidential Library and Museum, the Hudson River Maritime Museum, the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and Dutchess County.



The Hudson River Ice Yacht Club displayed twelve ice yachts on the Library lawn in 2008.

The ice yacht display runs from December 27, 2009 through January 2, 2010, weather permitting. The historic sites will be closed on New Year's Day.



Twenty-three year old Franklin D. Roosevelt sailing the ice yacht Hawk on the Hudson River, 1905.



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- ★ Free admission to all Presidential Libraries administered by the National Archives and Records Administration; www.archives.gov
- ★ Free use of the Roosevelt-era DVD lending library of the Pare Lorentz Center at the Roosevelt Library. www.parelorentzcenter.org

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Brains Trust

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Includes the benefits of New Dealer membership *plus* free admission to all Roosevelt Library and Roosevelt Institute seminars, conferences or lectures, where a fee is required. Subscription to the National Archives quarterly magazine, *Prologue*.

President's Cabinet

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Includes the benefits of Brains Trust membership *plus* a behind-the-scenes tour for up to four people of the Roosevelt Library archives.

Cuff Links Club

\$2,500

Includes the benefits of President's Cabinet membership *plus* two complimentary tickets to a Roosevelt Institute fundraising event (the Four Freedoms Medals Ceremony and Banquet or the FDR Distinguished Public Service Award) and a pair of sterling silver FDR and ER engraved cuff links from the New Deal Museum Store.

Student (age 16-22)

\$15

Free admission for one to the Roosevelt Library; free admission to all presidential libraries of the National Archives; membership to the student led college think tank, the Roosevelt Institution, subscriptions to the Roosevelt Institute e-newsletter and the Roosevelt Library's *Rendezpous* newsletter; free use of the Pare Lorentz Center DVD lending library.

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Signature _____ New Membership __ Renewal Membership

___ My company will match my charitable gifts. Company Name _____

I will contact my company's corporate giving office to send a matching gift form.
Please contact my corporate giving office at
I wish to give but not become a member. Gift amount: \$

Please send a Gift Membership to:

Mr./Mrs./Ms./Other _____ Name _____

Street _____

City ____ State ____ Zip_____

Telephone _____ Email _____

Gift from _____ Membership Category ______