



**Comment [D1]:** Jim Crow was a system of state laws that institutionalized segregation and fostered discrimination and violence against African Americans.

## Eleanor Roosevelt, "Abolish Jim Crow!" (1943)

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. A senator stood up in the Congress the other day after listening to a lengthy discourse on the poll tax, and spoke his mind on the discussion which was going on. Later he asked: "Are we fighting the Civil War all over again?"
2. Sometimes when I look at the Lincoln statue and read the things which he said, I think that we fought a bitter war which brought suffering to many people and yet achieved no answer to the question—are the colored people free in fact or only in word?
3. In that war we succeeded in establishing our unity. We would be one nation and not two and we said that all the people in our nation should enjoy equal rights and privileges, but in our hearts we never really believed what we said.
4. That is why we have to set to work to persuade our citizens not only to give lip-service to the results of the Civil War, but actually to put those results into practice, even though we are engaged in fighting a war to assure these same rights and privileges of freedom throughout the world.
5. A great many people believe that there should be no intermingling of races. Hitler has proved with bloody massacres that he holds this belief. Nevertheless, down through the ages, it has been proved over and over again that this is one of the questions which people settle for themselves, and no amount of legislation will keep them from doing so. We would not have so many different shades of color in this country today if this were not so. This is a question, therefore, that I think we have to leave to individuals, not only all over the United States, but all over the world, to handle.
6. There is no more reason to expect that there will be more intermarriage if the four fundamental basic rights of citizens are granted to all people in this country than there will be if they are withheld. In fact, I think it probable that there would be less.
7. An equal opportunity for education may raise economic standards as a whole—may make it possible for colored people to get equal pay, because they will have training equal to that of white people. There will be more self-respect; the dignity and pride of race will be enhanced and the bitterness of inferiority removed.
8. I am not writing from the point of view of the scientists, as their point of view is amply covered in many scientific books. I am trying to state the case clearly because we need firm ground to stand on as we fight this war.
9. Many a boy, when asked, still says he does not know what he is fighting for. While he knows we have to beat Hitler and the Japs, he will be glad when it is done and he is back home again. That would be all right if winning the war would settle all the racial questions, but it is after the war when we live together that they will become really important. In addition, if every boy was sure that he would be going back home again, he could decide later for what objectives he had fought and work for them, but if he is to die, he must be sure that what he died for is worthwhile to his parents, his brothers, his sisters, his wife or his sweetheart....
10. We are fighting a war today so that individuals all over the world may have freedom. This means an equal chance for every man to have food and shelter and a minimum of such things as spell happiness to that particular human personality. If we believe firmly that peace cannot come to

**Comment [D2]:** The Civil War's vast loss of life and widespread suffering didn't resolve how African-Americans were going to be treated in the United States. While slavery was abolished, African Americans still had real limits to their freedom. After the Civil War the federal government abolished slavery and granted civil and voting rights for African Americans through the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments. But much of this was in word only; state and local laws, especially in the South, in fact circumvented these rights and limited the civil liberties and economic opportunities for many African Americans.

**Comment [D3]:** The Civil War established some key principles: there would be a unified nation that supported the idea of all citizens having equal rights. However, those principles were not really supported in a meaningful way. While in the years immediately following the Civil War the freed slaves exercised their rights and had hopes of building a just and equal society, by 1877 the federal government betrayed the promises of Reconstruction and allowed the states to impose second class citizenship on African Americans.

**Comment [D4]:** The United States is fighting a war for freedom abroad (World War II), but we must also fight a war for freedom at home. We should also tell our citizens that we are fighting to finally make good on the promises of the Civil War and Reconstruction for equal rights for all.

**Comment [D5]:** Hitler and many others are opposed to intermarriage between members of different races; he has committed horrible violence in support of this belief. But intermarriage is a very personal question that stubbornly resists governmental intervention. Eleanor Roosevelt denounces Hitler's violence against Jewish intermarriage with other races. At the same time she assures people that the Four Freedoms will not encourage intermarriage.

the world unless this is true for men all over the world, then we must know in our nation that every man, regardless of race or religion, has this chance. Otherwise we fight for nothing of real value.

11. So here at home I think we have to fight for these four simple freedoms.
12. Equality before the law, which assures us of justice without prejudice, for Jew or Gentile, for any race or any color, as far as human beings can obtain justice.
13. Equality of education for everyone, because of the need for an equal opportunity in life.
14. Equality in the economic field, which means we are so organized in our communities and in our system of economics that all men who want to work will have work and that work will be suited to their capacity and will be rewarded without prejudice.
15. Finally, because we believe in the democratic and republican form of government, by which we are governed through the consent of the governed, we must give to all the citizens of a democracy a chance for equality of expression. We believe that there should be no impediment which prevents any man from expressing his will through the ballot.

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Eleanor Roosevelt, [Women in Politics](#), *Good Housekeeping* 110 (January 1940): 8-9, 150; (March 1940): 45, 68; (April 1940):201-203.

We are about to have a collective coming of age! The women in the United States have been participants in government for nearly twenty years. I think it behooves us to look back on this period in which we have been serving our apprenticeship and decide what our accomplishments have been, how much good our education has done us, and whether we really are able to consider ourselves full-fledged citizens.

Where did we start and how far have we come?

Twenty years ago, when we were granted the right of suffrage, some people thought that women were going to revolutionize the conduct of government. Yet all we were given was the right to vote. Men had had the vote on a fairly universal basis ever since the country was established—without achieving Utopia. Everyone knew that corruption still existed, and that the gentlemen did not always devote themselves to their civic duties in the unselfish and ardent manner that might be expected in a democracy. In 1919, however, this fact did not seem to prevent the belief that all desirable reforms would come about by the granting of suffrage to women. Alas and alas, the reforms just did not happen!

Perhaps it would be as well to mention also that some of the dire results prophesied if women were given the vote haven't come about, either.

Let us see what women have actually done in public life thus far.

It is fair, I think, to speak first of some of the women who were leaders in the fight for suffrage because of their influence on the thought of the men and women of the period, even though they may not actually have held public office. By studying them, I think we can get a very good idea of the qualities women must bring to public life. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw is dead; but Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt is still alive, and I have had the privilege of knowing her for many years. Both seem to have certain qualities in common: a deep belief in the justice of a cause; the power to organize and inspire other women; the ability to speak fluently, and to be both humorous and dramatic. Add good physical health—not a quality, perhaps, but an essential—and you have a picture of these two suffrage leaders.

Certain other suffrage leaders I know only from hearsay. Inez Milholland, for instance, was probably very able, and she certainly used her personal attractions to drive home her point! There is no question about it, both charm and good looks are useful weapons, which ladies can always use to good advantage when they have them, no matter what offices they hold.

In the past ten years fewer women have been elected to Congress and to state legislatures. The peak was reached in 1929, when thirty-eight states could boast of one hundred and forty-nine women in state legislatures. In 1939 there were only twenty-eight states having women representatives, and the total was only one hundred and twenty-nine women....

In the appointive positions, the trend shows an upward curve in both state and federal governments. This would seem to prove me correct in my surmise that women are not yet prepared to go out and stand up under the average political campaign. In addition men rarely are inclined to give them nominations for elective positions if there is a chance to elect a man; so, frequently, a woman is beaten for an elective office before she starts to run.

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In the old days men always said that politics was too rough-and-tumble a business for women; but that idea is gradually wearing away. There is more truth in the statement that men have a different attitude toward politics than women. They play politics a little more like a game. With the men, it becomes a serious occupation for a few weeks before election; whereas women look upon it as a serious matter year in and year out. It is associated with their patriotism and their duty to their country.

There are moments when I think that women's fervor to work continuously does not make them very popular with the gentlemen!...

Miss Dewson was interested in politics because of what she thought women could achieve through political organizations. She began her career in Boston, at the age of twenty-three, as a supervisor of the Girls' Parole Department of Massachusetts. She made her contact with state legislatures while she worked for the Consumers' League. She came into partisan political work during a national campaign. When that was over, she stayed on in the National Democratic Committee, and I think virtually all the men, from the President and Postmaster General Farley to most of the other heads of Departments, will concede that there has rarely been a woman more active in getting women into political positions!...

Many women in Washington today hold positions because of ability and preparation that has little or no connection with political work. They have been distinguished along some special line, and frequently they came in long before the present administration. But those who came in during this administration owe a great deal to Molly Dewson, and women as a whole should be grateful for the fact that she never backed a woman whom she did not think capable of holding the job she was trying to get. The record of women in office during the past few years shows that her judgment was, on the whole, good.

We have, for instance, the first woman member of a President's Cabinet—the Secretary of Labor, Miss Frances Perkins. Most of us find it difficult to recall the names of former Secretaries of Labor. I happen to remember one or two; but I find, when I ask my friends about them, that the only Secretary of Labor whom they know much about is Frances Perkins, the present incumbent. They do not always sing her praises; but they do know that she exists—first, because she had a career before she held her present office; next, because she has held an extremely difficult position in a most trying period and, on the whole, has acquitted herself well....

Now that we have considered what has happened to women in the political arena since they were granted the right of suffrage, I think it is only fair to deal with that perennial question: "What have women accomplished for human betterment with the vote?" ...

You will find, I think, women divided in the same groupings that have divided men, and they approach any question before the electorate in much the same way. There are liberals and conservatives among the women as well as among the men. As far as I can judge, only one thing stands out—namely, that on the whole, during the last twenty years, government has been taking increasing cognizance of humanitarian questions, things that deal with the happiness of human beings, such as health, education, security. There is nothing, of course, to prove that this is entirely because of the women's interest, and yet I think it is significant that this change has come about during the period when women have been exercising their franchise. It makes me surmise that women who do take an interest in public questions have thrust these interests to the fore, and obliged their fellow citizens to consider them. Whereas in the past these human problems have remained more or less in the background, today they are discussed by every governing body.

No revolution has come about because women have been given the vote, and it is perfectly true that many women are not thrilled by their opportunity to take part in political-party work. They probably do

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not like it so well as the men do, for we do not find them competing for places on party committees or for actual recognition in the political positions.

The women, however, are gradually increasing their activities. There are more women in civil-service positions and there are more women in rather inconspicuous, but important positions in city, state, and federal governments where technical knowledge is required.

When I went to Washington, I was so much impressed by the work they were doing that I started to have parties for women executives in various departments, and I discovered an astonishing number of women doing very important work, but getting comparatively little recognition because government is still a man's world.

As a result of all this, however, I find the influence of women emerging into a more important sphere. There was a time when no one asked: "What will the women think about this?" Now that question comes up often ....

Looking for concrete achievements, I feel we can really credit to the women only one over this period of years, and that is the one already mentioned—the government's attitude of concern for the welfare of human beings. On the whole, more interest is now taken in social questions. The government is concerned about housing, about the care of citizens who temporarily are unable to take care of themselves, about the care of handicapped children, whether handicapped by poor homes or by straitened circumstances. This is a general change, which I attribute to the fact that men had to appeal for the vote of the women and have therefore taken a greater interest in subjects they feel may draw women to their support....

What the future holds, none of us knows; but in this country we now hold that women have the same rights as men have. They do not have to justify their achievements as a group. I think we might legitimately ask whether as a democracy we have gone forward in the past twenty-one years, and take it for granted that if we have, it means that the majority of the women, as well as the majority of the men, have justified their right to suffrage.

Where are we going as women? Do we know where we are going? Do we know where we want to go?

I have a suggestion to make that will probably seem to you entirely paradoxical. Yet at the present juncture of civilization, it seems to me the only way for women to grow.

Women must become more conscious of themselves as women and of their ability to function as a group. At the same time they must try to wipe from men's consciousness the need to consider them as a group or as women in their everyday activities, especially as workers in industry or the professions.

Proceedings of the Second National Youth Administration Advisory Committee Meeting, 1936, National Archives.

MRS. BETHUNE: I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I regret exceedingly that Dr. Johnson is not here, because I think that this is a very vital and important part of the program and needs to have the very special attention of this committee because of its uniqueness in the country.

I want first of all to express on the part of the Negro people, our appreciation for the vision of our illustrious President, and his committee, in extending to the nation this NYA program. In my opinion, and I think I am thinking in terms of thinking Negro people, I believe it to be one of the most stabilizing projects for the benefit of the American of tomorrow, than possibly any one thing that we have done.

It seems to me that the giving of opportunity to the youths of today to round out in training and in vision for the citizens] of tomorrow is vitally important.

The Negro views with deep interest the national program for all youth and approves most highly its objectives. More particularly is the Negro interested in those phases of the program, which for the first time in the history of the nation, affords to Negro youth through Federal benefits, larger opportunities for education, productive work and cultural and wholesome recreation. Among the most invaluable outcomes of the National Youth program as related to the Negro youth have been:

1. His optimistic awakening to the responsibility of citizenship made possible through the channels of training provided through the program of the National Youth Administration.
2. The fine spirit of cooperation of the general Negro public in fostering the objectives of the program of the NYA.
3. The fine spirit of cooperation and healthy participation on the part of Negro educators and leaders, and state and local NYA Administrators.

I think, Mr. Chairman, and members of this committee, this NYA program has afforded the finest opportunity for interracial cooperation and understanding in these local communities, than any one thing that we have had come among us, particularly in our own southern section.

Through the program of the National Youth movement touching the humblest black boy of the South has come a realization on the part of thousands of untutored Negro parents that the government does care,—for "even the least of these."

In places where there is no need for a separate program, for Negro and white groups, we most heartily recommend the one program. And in fields where it is necessary for us to have a separate program, we most heartily recommend a separate program, taking, of course, under advisement, the necessity of the proper leadership and guidance that we might be able to do the most effective work.

It is recommended that this committee accept as a matter of policy the following: Continuing the policy adopted by the committee at its previous meeting regarding the appointment of qualified Negroes as members of staffs of state and local organizations; and the recognition of the value of Negro Supervision for strictly Negro work projects.

May I advise the committee that it does not matter how equipped your white supervision might be, or your white leadership, it is impossible for you to enter as sympathetically and understanding, into the program of the Negro, as the Negro can do. Then it will give, also, the thing that we very much need nowadays, that opportunity for the development of leadership among the Negro people themselves, and it is becoming more important that the right type of leadership be produced. They can only become efficient by having the opportunity to develop and grow in participation in these programs.

We recognize that great care and diplomacy are necessary in certain places to bring this idea to pass. I want you to keep that in mind, for all of these years I have been reared and working in a community

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where it takes the type of understanding leadership, to take steps slowly but surely. Sometimes we are standing still rather than breaking up and organizing; but if you will stand by the policy of opening the doors as rapidly as possible, with sane qualified leadership, you are going to find that it will build more substantially for permanency and for the type of citizenship that we want to mold.

Notwithstanding this difficulty, the committee must not permit itself to be turned aside from the prosecution and realization of the major objectives of the National Youth program, chief of which is the development of an appreciation of citizenship values in the minds of American youth regardless of race, creed or color.

Since in some states, particularly in the South where Negroes have not had the opportunities for preparation for college life, it is recommended that funds be earmarked to be used specifically for Negro youth in equalizing educational opportunities in certain states where the Negro has not been able to obtain equal educational opportunities. I beg this Committee, whose position is so sacred in administering this program as handed down by our illustrious President, to keep eternal vigilance to safeguard the interest and welfare of all the youth of America. I speak particularly in behalf of the Negro youth. (Applause.)

Chairman Taussig: I not only want to thank Mrs. Bethune for her able report, but again to call the attention of the committee to the fact that Mrs. Bethune has been one of our most active members and has traveled over great areas of the country, and has given a great deal of fine sympathetic attention to this problem.

Mrs. Bethune: Mr. Chairman, may I just state to you that we have organized very recently, what we term the National Council of Negro Women. This council brings into one group all of the national organizations of women, educational, fraternal, religious, civic and otherwise. We are putting straight before this group the importance of this NYA program, and it has been most gratifying how the club women, and the fraternal women and the church women, through their conferences and through their sub-meetings throughout the country, have put into action their cooperation and helpfulness in carrying forward this program.

I believe that the Negro women behind this program [are] going to be in the future a very great and influential power.

--Audrey Thomas McCluskey and Elaine M. Smith, *Mary McLeod Bethune: Building a Better World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 216-218.