



# A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

By Mary Ann Glendon

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Unafraid to speak her mind and famously tenacious in her convictions, Eleanor Roosevelt was still mourning the death of FDR when she was asked by President Truman to lead a controversial commission, under the auspices of the newly formed United Nations, to forge the world's first international bill of rights.

**A World Made New** is the dramatic and inspiring story of the remarkable group of men and women from around the world who participated in this historic achievement and gave us the founding document of the modern human rights movement. Spurred on by the horrors of the Second World War and working against the clock in the brief window of hope between the armistice and the Cold War, they grappled together to articulate a new vision of the rights that every man and woman in every country around the world should share, regardless of their culture or religion.

A landmark work of narrative history based in part on diaries and letters to which Mary Ann Glendon, an award-winning professor of law at Harvard University, was given exclusive access, **A World Made New** is the first book devoted to this crucial turning point in Eleanor Roosevelt's life, and in world history.

*Finalist for the Robert F. Kennedy Book Award*

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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

In 1947, in a world recently ripped apart by the Holocaust, a devastating war and mass displacement, the very idea of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights seemed both impossible and supremely necessary. As the specter of the Cold War loomed, a U.N. delegation, chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, began writing what would become the world's first standard statement of human rights. Glendon, a professor of law at Harvard University, has written a compelling, at times thrilling account of how Roosevelt and her cohorts argued and cajoled one another through a series of intellectual, political and moral positions, finally hammering out a statement that was acceptable across national, religious and philosophical lines. While Glendon successfully traces the evolution of the document—which was ratified on December 10, 1948, after six drafts and much debate by the U.N. General Assembly—she also presents a richly textured portrait of a woman driven to public service while simultaneously grieving for her late husband. Roosevelt's politics were also at issue: at one point, she resigned from the U.N. over the U.S. government's initial disapproval of the creation of Israel. Glendon concludes with a legal analysis of the declaration and a lengthy discussion of its applicability today, when many non-Western nations (such as China) claim that the concept of "universal" human rights precepts precludes an acceptance of cultural differences. Glendon's work is a welcome addition to the realm of international law and to the growing body of literature on Eleanor Roosevelt's role in modern politics.

Agents, Lynn Chu and Glen Hartley, Writer's Representatives.

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From Library Journal

When it was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was the first formal statement of what the phrase human rights actually entailed. Glendon (law, Harvard) has written a legislative history of the Declaration covering both the negotiation process and the ratification debates and process during the years 1946-52. The book is based on extensive access to the diaries and unpublished memoirs of many of the participants as they worked with the horrors of World War II fresh in their minds and against the backdrop of the rapidly chilling Cold War. While the content and phrasing of the Declaration are the product of the many fine minds and strong personalities who worked on it, Eleanor Roosevelt is here given full credit for facilitating the process and steering the group to a final agreement that incorporated the best from many cultural and religious traditions. Recommended for academic libraries and broad Roosevelt collections. DMarcia L. Sprules, Council on Foreign Relations Lib., New York

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From [The New Yorker](#)

After the Second World War, the fledgling United Nations called for what would become the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Never before had an international body attempted to comprehensively define such rights, and the drafting committee, which was chaired by Eleanor Roosevelt, struggled over content and language to reflect the diversity of its members' traditions while expressing the commonality of the human race. Mrs. Roosevelt's formidable diplomacy produced agreement, and the document was ratified in 1948. With access to both private and public sources, Glendon, a noted legal scholar, has written a fascinating account of the noble and vexed history of this document, which remains almost as radical now as it was half a century ago.

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#### **Arthur Freeman:**

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