

UNION WOMEN LEADERS: A SUMMARY

I have always felt that it was important that everyone who was a worker join a labor organization.

Eleanor Roosevelt spoke these words to striking women workers in 1941, as First Lady of the United States. She supported the fight for workers' rights and encouraged women's leadership in many ways. As a teacher, columnist, author, advocate, political activist, and member of The Newspaper Guild for over 25 years, Eleanor Roosevelt led by example:

As a member of the National Women's Trade Union League, encouraging women to join unions and working in their education programs.

As First Lady, supporting women's leadership in government, their right to work, with equal pay and opportunities, and opposing all discrimination in employment, education, and housing.

As a leader in the Democratic Party, challenging women to use their citizenship rights to organize, campaign, vote and govern.

As a delegate to the United Nations, guiding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to adoption, including the right to equal pay for equal work.

As chair of the first President's Commission on the Status of Women, working closely with union women.

As wife and mother, sister, daughter-in-law, grandmother, and friend struggling with the competing demands of family, friendship, and work in her public and private life.

Eleanor Roosevelt worked hard and overcame fears.. She took voice lessons to improve her public speaking and she did not let repeated threats on her life deter her active schedule.

There was no union convention too large or local union hall too small for her attention. What she did on a national and international level, she believed everyone could and should do on a local level for:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home... unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.