

# Eleanor roosevelt



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Discuss in detail how one of the First Ladies (since 1933) has made an impact on a social issue in the United States First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt experienced tremendous pain throughout her childhood and believed she would find happiness in helping others. Her sense of social responsibility started in early adulthood advocating for the disadvantaged. After entering the White House in March, 1933 her eyes opened to the depth of racial discrimination and the suffering of African Americans. She made it known that the United States government had a moral duty to ensure racial equality. Her critics viewed her standpoint as radical. Mrs. Roosevelt did not waiver in her fight against discrimination despite the political constraints, failures and public outrage.

This was evident in “Arthurdale”, a small community in West Virginia created to help destitute citizens become economically self-sufficient during the Great Depression. She pushed the Homestead Administration to admit African Americans but they refused. She fought and succeeded in getting other low cost housing for African American families. Mrs. Roosevelt urged President Roosevelt as well as the entire nation to confront the discrimination that faced African Americans. She viewed racial discrimination as undemocratic and immoral. She showed her opposition publicly against the heinous crime of lynching perpetrated on African Americans by Caucasian supremacists.

When the Costigan-Wagner anti-lynching bill was introduced in 1934, civil rights leader, Walter White needed Mrs. Roosevelt’s assistance to secure the president’s support. Her support infuriated the President’s administration

and southerners. This led many including FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to conclude she had African American blood in her veins.

Despite her best effort the bill failed. The President did not support it for various political reasons. Later in 1939, Present Roosevelt created the Civil Rights Section of the Justice Department making lynching a crime, but failed to win any convictions until 1946. In 1939 Mrs. Roosevelt resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution after they refused to let African American Marian Anderson sing in their Constitution Hall. Mrs. Roosevelt's action put racism in the national spotlight.

The First Lady was instrumental in arranging for Ms. Anderson to perform at the Lincoln Memorial instead. Her biggest accomplishment in the struggle for racial justice was the Fair Employment Practices Commission established through Executive order by President Roosevelt in June 1941. It read “ there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin. ” She played a pivotal role in the ending of military segregation, and in the training of the Tuskegee Airmen's becoming active fighter pilots in World War II. Their success proved that African Americans were just as capable as their Caucasian counterpart. After President Roosevelt's death in April of 1945, she joined the NAACP becoming the first Caucasian D. C.

resident to be a board member. Up until her death in 1962, she continued her fearless work against racism. Her relentless support significantly impacted the future of African Americans.

In a condolence letter to her family, Dr. Martin Luther King wrote “ Her life was one of the bright interludes in the troubled history of mankind. ”