



Eleanor Roosevelt: Transformative First Lady (Modern First Ladies)

Maurine H. Beasley

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Presiding in the White House longer than any other first lady, Eleanor Roosevelt championed the downtrodden as she traveled the globe, yet she was a maze of contradictions—an idealist who carried on a moneymaking career that depended on her position and a conventional-appearing wife and mother who found emotional succor from intense relationships outside her family. This book cuts through those contradictions to reveal how Eleanor operated, both in and out of public view, to advance the causes in which she believed by participating in the political process.

Although previous books have dealt with Eleanor Roosevelt, this is the first to focus on her White House years. Maurine Beasley, a scholar with extensive knowledge of Eleanor's life and times, provides a detailed examination of the innovative first lady that will enlighten those who think they already know her. Rich with detail, it effectively links her social activism from her early life, through the White House years, and to her work after FDR's presidency. From the ways in which Eleanor earned a living to the domestic arrangements in the White House, Beasley is an insightful and informed guide to the historical issues surrounding Mrs. Roosevelt's performance, describing how she took the ambiguous position of first lady and transformed it into an institution of the American political system.

Beasley leaves no stone unturned as she casts fresh light on Eleanor's relations with Franklin, the people around her, and the causes she championed. She explores how personal relationships led Mrs. Roosevelt to hone political skills that redefined the position of the first lady for years to come. And as she enlarges our understanding of Eleanor's use of media to disseminate her political views, Beasley illuminates her complex network of personal relationships, finances, contributions to New Deal programs, and extensive publicity commitments.

Here is a book that will reward general readers interested in Eleanor's historical importance and inform specialists looking for judicious appraisals of her words, her deeds, and the controversies that surrounded her. Anyone interested in the enigma that was Eleanor Roosevelt will discover here a rich trove of essential information for understanding how this dynamic and troubled woman succeeded in transforming the institution of the first lady during a dozen years of activism and commitment.

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