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Review of *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Volume I: The Human Rights Years, 1945–1948*; Allida M. Black, editor; John F. Sears and Mary Jo Binker, associate editors; Craig Daigle and Michael Weeks, assistant editors, and Christopher Alhambra, electronic editor

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The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Volume I: The Human Rights Years, 1945–1948; Allida M. Black, editor; John F. Sears and Mary Jo Binker, associate editors; Craig Daigle and Michael Weeks, assistant editors, and Christopher Alhambra, electronic editor (Detroit: Charles Scribner's sons/Thomson Gale, 2007–).

Kathleen Dalton

The publication of the first volume of the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project (ERPP), edited by Allida Black and her associates at George Washington University, is an event of the utmost significance to documentary editors and historians alike. Nothing like this pathbreaking volume exists in the ER literature, and this resource will forever change the research landscape. This volume stands for documentary editing at its best, and the larger ERPP itself, with its informative website and teacher training workshops, is a model of the highest editorial scholarship applied innovatively to the mission of public education.

What is new and different about the project's approach? Never before has anyone attempted to gather and assess Eleanor Roosevelt's correspondence and writings in a systematic way. Before this project, scholars and general readers had to look for bits and pieces of ER's letters and writings in scattered published and microfilm collections, some of which are unsourced, undated, and annotated inaccurately or not at all.¹ However, the incompleteness of previous ER published letters needs to be understood in the context of the magnitude of the editing challenge. The archivists at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library officially estimate that out of the 17,000,000 documents they hold, 2,190,000 are part of the ER collection there.² But ER's letters and published writings are not held only at the FDR Library. Outside the FDR Library, ER documents can be found in 263 archives around the world. Anyone aspiring to a more comprehensive editing of ER's papers (aside from her twenty-seven books) would have to track down and select from 8,000 columns, 580 articles, hundreds of speeches,

¹ Among the less reliable collections are: Eleanor Roosevelt, *It Seems to Me: Selected Letters of Eleanor Roosevelt*, edited by Leonard C. Schlup and Donald W. Whisenhut (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001) and the two volumes edited by ER's close friend Joseph P. Lash: *Love, Eleanor: Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Friends* (Garden City, N.Y. : Doubleday, 1982) and *A World of Love: Eleanor Roosevelt and Her Friends, 1943–1962* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984).

² Email to author from Robert Clark, July 2008; Allida M. Black, ed., *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers, Volume I: The Human Rights Years, 1945–1948*; John F. Sears and Mary Jo Binker, associate editors; Craig Daigle and Michael Weeks, assistant editors; and Christopher Alhambra, electronic editor (Detroit : Charles Scribner's sons/Thomson Gale, 2007-), xlv.

326 radio broadcasts, the transcripts and tapes of a few years of the public television program she hosted, and a huge number of ER-authored letters (estimates run from 100,000 to more than half a million).³ Because of the organizational challenge posed by such a vast paper trail, the ERPP's first volume and its four projected volumes will represent a unique contribution to historical editing.

Vital to the success of the ERPP has been the sponsorship of its home institution, George Washington University, where the executive director of the Eleanor Roosevelt Papers & Human Rights Project, Allida M. Black, has made the project the scholarly endeavor that ER deserved. A renowned ER scholar, Black was the perfect choice for editor, because her 1996 book placed ER at the center of the national debates about racial justice and Cold War policy, and proved that ER exerted a significant influence on the United Nations in its founding years.⁴ Her skill as an editor had already become apparent in her short published collections of ER's political writings.⁵

The ERPP searched around the world to identify the extensive base of ER's published writings and correspondence. Because it was not practical to publish everything ER wrote, the ERPP consulted with their major funding source, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), and after discussing it with other Roosevelt experts, "decided to produce a highly selective edition designed to present an authoritative resource on Eleanor Roosevelt's political and human rights record and to encourage further research on her life and the issues she addressed."⁶ They chose to emphasize ER's public career after FDR died, especially her career as a journalist and as a United Nations diplomat who won—with the help of other delegates—the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR), an historic agreement about the minimum standards for governments to maintain in dealing with their own citizens. Their selection criteria focused on major biographical events and roles in ER's life, as well as the range of ER's issues and her means for promoting change. They chose not to limit themselves to ER's letters and articles but included in their search radio broadcasts, columns, speeches, memos, and hearing transcripts, which add a richness to this volume found in few edited

³ These statistics come from Black, *Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*, vol. 1, xlv, except for the estimate of 100,000 letters, which comes from Allida M. Black, ed., *Courage in a Dangerous World: The Political Writings of Eleanor Roosevelt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 2.

⁴ Allida M. Black, *Casting Her Own Shadow: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Shaping of Postwar Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); see also a study of the legal issues related to the creation of the UNDHR by Mary Ann Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2001).

⁵ *Courage in a Dangerous World*, ed. Black; and *What I Hope to Leave Behind: The Essential Essays of Eleanor Roosevelt*, edited and with an introduction by Allida M. Black; preface by Blanche Wiesen Cook (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Pub., 1995).

⁶ Black, *Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*, vol. 1, xlv.

papers. Looking for public (and not private) documents from 1945–1962, they collected 130,000 documents and searched far beyond the FDR Library. For example, in Scotland they dug up ER's revealing letter to Arthur Murray criticizing Winston Churchill's saber-rattling Fulton, Missouri, speech about the Iron Curtain descending across eastern Europe, which illuminates how ER viewed Churchill after the war and how unnecessary she thought the emerging Cold War was in 1946.⁷

In developing explicit goals and reasonable limitations for the project, the ERPP built upon the editing techniques for establishing and annotating texts used by other documentary editing projects. First-rate identifications and annotation help the reader understand how to evaluate each document, and the timeline will assist students in seeing the historical context. Students, including secondary school students, could easily use the index and table of contents in Volume I to locate topics in the text. They could use the documents to write term papers on ER's life as a diplomat, her role in the creation of the UNDHR, her place in the founding years of the United Nations, ER's role in the Democratic Party's search for identity in the wake of FDR's death, ER and the communist and anti-communist menaces, ER and postwar foreign policy issues, ER's relationship with President Truman, or any number of other topics.

The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project, in part because of its expansive leadership, aimed early on for wide educational impact. Its most easily accessible educational tool is its own website, which is designed to introduce general readers, students, and scholars to Eleanor Roosevelt's life. ER's "My Day" columns are posted online, along with a selection of ER's essays (<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/>). The ERPP website also provides excellent lesson plans for several levels of students. These include a useful plan about ER's role in the 1960 candidate selection process that will help secondary school and college students use documents to understand how historians write history. In addition to its teacher workshops and work with the Teaching American History grants, the ERPP has also worked closely with the National Park Service to make document packets available for site visitors and to update the on-site tour and exhibit interpretation and online Eleanor Roosevelt information (see www.nps.gov/elro).

Most historical editing projects have necessarily been stay-at-home affairs, constrained by their control files and tight budgets. But as the Organization of American Historians and the National Park Service commit themselves to building bonds with new audiences for history, mini-editions of editorial projects connected with the Model Editions Partnership and the Association for

⁷ ER to Arthur Murray, 10 October 1946, in *Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*, ed. Black, vol. 1, 384–85; see also 280–81.

Documentary Editing have embraced innovative forms of educational outreach. Though Internet education has become a more common feature of editorial projects' missions, it is less common for projects to become as involved in Teaching American History (TAH) grants and teacher workshops as the ERPP. Perhaps the historical subject of a project begins after a certain number of years to take hold of an editorial staff's values: ER the activist and educator would certainly have urged public service and frequent out-of-the-office experiences to temper any ivory tower reclusion bred by historians' and archivists' professional socialization. The ERPP innovates further by declaring on its website that it seeks to use its documents to work with "citizens around the world to further discussion of democracy and human rights." As a result, the impact of the ERPP is broad, and students and scholars look for help and get it from the energetic editor and her capable staff.

The ERPP human rights curriculum is an inspirational tool for teachers on all levels of education to introduce moral questions into the study of history and to bring historical perspectives to bear on current human rights dilemmas. Nothing could be a more appropriate way to honor Eleanor Roosevelt than to use her writings and her fierce moral fervor to animate the conscience of a new generation of students.

Allida Black's talents as a historian are matched by her people skills as a project manager. In a world where turf wars over control of manuscripts and interpretation break out all too easily, she constructed a cooperative endeavor which brought highly skilled editorial associates, volunteers, students, donors, and several institutions together. The FDR Library, staffed by knowledgeable and helpful archivists who deal with heavy phone and researcher traffic daily, would have been justified in refusing to find time to assist an outside editorial project. It is to their credit and Black's that they have become enthusiastic partners of the ERPP, as have the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute (FERI), the National Park Service, the NHPRC, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and other agencies. The extraordinary range of sources in this volume is due to the ERPP's masterful diplomacy and stamina, and it also stands as a monument to the devoted work of archivists and librarians. In December 2008, the many ERPP partnerships bore fruit as FERI and the FDR Library joined the ERPP in hosting a major symposium to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and ER's major influence in advancing the agenda of human rights.

In her perceptive introduction to Volume I, Black provides a biographical sketch of ER that gives the context for the whole edition. She argues that the political partnership of ER and FDR had made ER a major political player before 1945, which echoes a theme from the first two volumes of Blanche Wiesen Cook's insightful, well-written, and vigorously researched biography of

ER (volume three is in the works). Unlike Black and Cook, previous generations of political historians left ER out of much of the New Deal literature and studies of the postwar period. For example, the classic study by William Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932–1940*, neglects altogether ER's role as a much-needed spokesperson who helped her husband sell Congress and voters on New Deal policies and later war volunteerism. Black in her introduction explains how ER's speeches and travels helped FDR garner votes for New Deal programs, a fact which he eventually recognized. At the same time that FDR charmed segments of the public with his radio Fireside Chats, ER opened up her own parallel democratic engagement with the American people by encouraging the average American to "write to me." She received an avalanche of mail from citizens who were once again willing to believe in government, and she tried to get government to respond to the people's needs. Black also reminds us that Mrs. Roosevelt exerted considerable influence on the Federal One programs (the Federal Theater Project, Federal Writers Project, and Federal Art Project), as well as the National Youth Administration, and as a journalist had a readership commensurate with the other great newspaper columnists of her day, Dorothy Thompson and Walter Lippmann. In Black's introduction to Volume I she also sets the stage for the 1945–48 period by describing ER's role in winning FDR's support for the Fair Employment Practices Commission; her struggle to save refugees from Hitler's Europe; her rapport with the emerging civil rights movement; and her willingness to speak out against race riots, segregation, and lynching, which helped solidify the black vote for the Democrats.

After charting ER's political significance before FDR's death, Black argues—and the documents prove—that "FDR's death expanded, rather than limited, her sphere of influence. No longer just FDR's 'Missus,' she could now choose to speak out and act as either his widow or as herself."⁸ By 1945 ER was a major political player whom world leaders respected and whose counsel they sought. President Truman frequently asked her advice, though he often ignored it. One of the most entertaining moments in Volume I comes when Eleanor Roosevelt tells Truman bluntly that his Loyalty Review Boards did not protect the rights of the accused government workers and lobbies him hard to accord workers their civil liberties.

In addition to its brilliant introduction, the ERPP's most remarkable accomplishment in Volume I is the supreme usefulness of its selection. Their choices make clear ER's opinion that President Truman was inept at dealing with the Russians after the war, but they also show the respect and collaboration

⁸ Black, "Introduction," *Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*, vol. 1, xli.

that emerged between Mrs. Roosevelt and her husband's successor. Their editorial choices also bring to light little known chapters in ER's political life. Nowhere else could you find a published version of her measured radio address responding to charges that she was a communist, a rare glimpse of ER's frank and skillful riposte against the politicians who had also called public figures from Herbert Hoover to ER's mother-in-law Sara Delano Roosevelt communists.⁹ These editorial decisions show as no other published source does ER's courageous assaults on her critics' faulty logic and give us new evidence of her fine sense of humor.

Volume I also documents ER's reasons for becoming one of the founders of the anti-communist Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), and it chronicles how she came to be the first nationally known critic of Joseph McCarthy. When selecting ER's statements defending Laughlin Currie and Alger Hiss against double agent Elizabeth Bentley's charges that they had spied for the Soviets, the editors of the ERPP rightfully do not characterize ER's position. They cite the latest scholarship about Currie and Hiss's guilt that was available when they went to press and allow others to decide whether Mrs. Roosevelt rightfully defended the wrongfully accused or if she was being fooled by the communists.¹⁰ Here the editors do their best work by presenting controversial evidence in a neutral way.

The ERPP also wisely chose documents that tell the story of ER's career as a key steward of the modern human rights movement. She drew the ire of the KKK when she stood up for the postwar civil rights movement, and she worked to protect the rights of workers and free speech in the U.S. and around the world. When Truman appointed her as a delegate to the United Nations she faced a daunting diplomatic challenge. The documents show her cajoling Soviet delegates and building alliances with other human rights advocates to gain support for a document that would be a basis for further human rights struggles. These documents will help future historians tell the complete story of ER and the human rights movement. They show that the U.S. did not, in fact, impose the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) on the rest of the world. Rather, ER's persistent diplomatic efforts enabled the U.S. to act as a respectful partner to Lebanon, China, and other countries. Historians who write about post-World War II America or United Nations and international politics after the war will need to reconsider what they know about the postwar period

⁹ "Eleanor and Anna Roosevelt Radio Program," 17 November 1948, in *Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*, ed. Black, vol. 1, 936.

¹⁰ See their balanced description on pages 849, 879–82, and their reference to the book by John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr, *Early Cold War Spies: The Espionage Trials that Shaped American Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); but see also <http://www.theamericanscholar.org/su07/ales-bird.html>.

because of the evidence presented in Volume I; it will add momentum and further evidence for the ongoing debates about the significance of ER's role in history.¹¹

Eleanor Roosevelt's legacy is still in the making, and the ERPP is at the core of that process. ER, alive in these documents in Volume I and online, expressed her humanitarian empathy with people of every nation who suffered from dislocation, hunger, and war. In the postwar era ER continued her White House career as an advocate for the refugees of World War II, and while she served as a U.S. delegate to the United Nations Mrs. Roosevelt worked unstintingly to save lives and to make governments welcome refugees. The movement for human rights around the world, after some years of dormancy, came alive again in organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, and in the institutionalization of a U.S. human rights policy in the late twentieth century.¹² The ripple effect of ER's work on the UNDHR has prompted some legal scholars to assert that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) provided the "moral beacon" that made possible the demise of apartheid in South Africa and the fall of communism in Eastern Europe. If that long-term impact can be substantiated, then U.S. and world history texts will need to be rewritten to include ER's worldwide postwar influence.¹³ No new biography of Eleanor Roosevelt or history of the postwar period can be written without the essential texts and editorial genius that Allida Black and her staff have given us in the *Eleanor Roosevelt Papers*. The ERPP, then, is as good as documentary editing gets: superb collection and selection, scholarly presentation of documents with a text accessible to general readers, research that will make a difference for generations to come, and a project that welcomes students and teachers alike to learn more about ER and human rights.

¹¹ Following Leuchtenberg's tendency to underrate ER is George T. McJimsey, who edited the *Documentary History of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidency* (Bethesda, MD: University Publications of America, 2001–3), a valuable facsimile edition of selected documents from the FDR Library. Out of forty volumes, ER warranted as many as the Gold Standard crisis of 1933–34: just one.

¹² For the institutionalization of U.S. human rights policy, see Clair Apodaca, *Understanding U.S. Human Rights Policy: A Paradoxical Legacy* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹³ Glendon, *A World Made New*, 236.