

Eleanor Roosevelt Transcript of Speech on Human Rights 1951

Paragraph One:

I'm very glad to be able to take part in this celebration in St. Louis on Human Rights Day. Ever since the declaration of human rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, was passed in Paris in 1948 on December the 10th, we have fostered the observance of this day not only in the United States but throughout the world.

Paragraph Two:

The object is to make people everywhere conscious of the importance of human rights and freedoms.

Paragraph Three:

The reason for that is that these are spoken of and emphasized in the Charter of the United Nations, and the declaration was written to elaborate the rights already mentioned in the charter and to emphasize also, for all of us, the fact that the building of human rights would be one of the foundation stones, on which we would build in the world, an atmosphere in which peace can grow.

Paragraph Four:

For that reason, all over the world we've encouraged the Association for the United Nations to observe a whole week before United Nations Day comes around to explain the United Nations and what goes on in that organization and when we come to the celebration for human rights we try to particularly have people study the declaration so that they will really understand what were considered to be the most essential rights for all people to have throughout the world.

Paragraph Five:

They fall into different groups and one reason that we are now considering the writing of a covenant or covenants is because we feel that these rights should sometimes be actually written into the laws of countries throughout the world, and that can be done by the adoption of covenants and the changing of laws to meet whatever a country has accepted in a covenant which will be written in treaty form.

Paragraph Six:

These things must be well understood because even though you pass, you accept treaties and countries ratify those treaties, the real change, which must give to people throughout the world their human rights, must come about in the hearts of people.

Paragraph Seven:

We must want our fellow human beings to have rights and freedoms which give them dignity and which will give them a sense that they are human beings that can walk the earth with their heads high and look all men in the face.

Paragraph Eight:

If we observe these rights, for ourselves and for others, I think we will find that it is easier in the world to build peace because war destroys all human rights and freedoms, so in fighting for those we fight for peace.