

**Excerpt from Eleanor Roosevelt, “The Promise of Human Rights,”  
*Foreign Affairs* (April 1948)**

. . . As I look back at the work thus far of our Human Rights Commission I realize that its importance is twofold.

In the first place, we have put into words some inherent rights. Beyond that, we have found that the conditions of our contemporary world require the enumeration of certain protections which the individual must have if he is to acquire a sense of security and dignity in his own person. The effect of this is frankly educational. Indeed, I like to think that the Declaration will help forward very largely the education of the peoples of the world.

It seems to me most important that the Declaration be accepted by all member nations, not because they will immediately live up to all of its provisions, but because they ought to support the standards toward which the nations must henceforward aim. Since the objectives have been clearly stated, men of good will everywhere will strive to attain them with more energy and, I trust, with better hope of success.

As the Convention is adhered to by one country after another, it will actually bring into being rights which are tangible and can be invoked before the law of the ratifying countries. Everywhere many people will feel more secure. And as the Great Powers tie themselves down by their ratifications, the smaller nations which fear that the great may abuse their strength will acquire a sense of greater assurance.

The work of the Commission has been of outstanding value in setting before men’s eyes the ideals which they must strive to reach. Men cannot live by bread alone.

Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project:

<http://www.gwu.edu/~erpapers/documents/articles/promiseofhumanrights.cfm>