

## MRS. ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S OWN PROGRAM

June 20, 1940

Description: Broadcast time 1:15-1:30 PM over the NBC Red network. ER discusses the meaning of democracy and the ways ordinary women can become better citizens. ER also reads from a *New York Times* article from Flag Day (14 June).

Participants: Ben Grauer, Eleanor Roosevelt, NBC Announcer

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(49:54)

[Ben Grauer:] This is *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's Own Program* presented by the makers of SweetHeart Soap.

[Theme music 50:00-50:28]

[Ben Grauer:] You're invited to join thousands of other American women today in welcoming Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt speaks to you from New York through special arrangement with the makers of SweetHeart Soap, the pure, delicately fragrant bath and beauty soap that's been famous since 1890. And now, your gracious visitor, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt.

[ER:] Good day, ladies and gentlemen. I've put off until now answering some of the serious questions which have come in because the times are so troubled that I felt most of you had enough gloomy things to think about without concentrating on something serious on this program. I notice, however, that in our family we discuss these problems around the table and every member of the family is keenly interested in them. So today we will turn to some of these questions.

Many letters have arrived asking me to talk about democracy, to tell how I think everyone in this land can have a satisfying life; how people can live and not die for democracy, how we can share the work, the joys and the sorrows in this world so that we may all be able to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Well, the first way of course is to really try to become a democratic center in the community, to be a person to whom people will turn with the knowledge that they will have a hearing. In this way, you will really know about your community and serve to interpret the meaning of democracy as a way of life. A representative democracy such as ours is a government which allows its people to govern through the election of representatives. People here are free to express their convictions through the ballot, and if they exercise their power intelligently, they choose good leaders who really represent them.

But self-government does not end with the ballot. It is your duty to follow up the people you elect, to see that they perform their duties. Politically, this is what one should do in a democracy where citizens take their duties seriously. When an entire community has a sense of responsibility for everyone in it, as well as for the community as a whole, then democracy is more than a word, it is a way of life.

Under this democratic way of life, every citizen is assured certain things, namely the right to an adequate return for one's labor in whatever field one is able to contribute it under proper protections, the right to obtain an education as far as one's ability allows one to pursue it, the right to basic freedoms of the press, of assembly, of speech, and of religion. And to these rights, we must add a concern that every individual shall have a decent place in which to live, a decent chance for health and adequate recreation. Under those circumstances, democracy lives, grows, and has meaning for every citizen. (53:56)

In a democratic community, it is not necessary that everyone shall have the same things, for all people's desires and aspirations are not the same. But under such a government, everyone shall have equal opportunity, and it is opportunity which is the lifeblood of democracy. It may be necessary for us to die as well as to live for democracy. But we will die gladly to protect this type of freedom and justice for every individual. Dying will seem preferable to living under certain restraints.

In times such as this, it is necessary for every one of us to reexamine some of the fundamental concepts of democracy. We must redefine such words as "patriotism." We must be sure to understand what the American flag stands for. The American flag represents our history and our ideals. We came from thirteen original states, and we have grown from these little red and white bars, to the forty-eight, symbolized by our forty-eight stars. Patriotism is something which makes me think, as I look at an American flag, of the things I love, the country whose soil is dear to me. I think of the ideals for which other Americans have sacrificed themselves.

On Flag Day of this year, the New York Times printed an editorial which so beautifully describes the significance of that day that I should like to read at least a part of it to you. Here it is: "What's a flag? What's the love of country for which it stands? Maybe it begins with the love of the land itself. It's the fog rolling in with the tide at Eastport, or through the Golden Gate among the towers of San Francisco. It's the sun coming up behind the White Mountains over the Green, throwing a shining glory on Lake Champlain and above the Adirondacks. It's the storied Mississippi rolling swift and muddy past St. Louis, rolling past Cairo, pouring down past the levees of New Orleans. It's lazy noontime in the pines of Carolina, it's the sea of wheat rippling in Western Kansas, it's the San Francisco peaks far north across the glowing nakedness of Arizona, it's the Grand Canyon and the little stream coming down out of a New England ridge in which are trout...

"It's a great multitude of people on pilgrimage, common and ordinary people charged with the usual human failings, yet filled with such a hope as never caught the imaginations and the hearts of any nation on Earth before...

"The land and the people and the flag-- the land, a continent, the people of every race, the flag a symbol of what humanity may aspire to when the wars are over and the barriers are down; to these, our generation must be dedicated and consecrated anew, to defend with life itself, if need be, but above all, in friendliness, in hope, in courage, to live for." (57:52)

So concludes an editorial which can be a guide and an inspiration for all of us. Not so long ago, I received a letter which included the interesting thought that some Americans who traced their ancestry to the Mayflower took their freedom for granted. The same writer also points out that many other Americans who've come here more recently, sometimes abuse our American freedom. I suppose this is a reference to the groups amongst us that have banded together as Nazis, Fascists, or Communists. These groups are troublesome largely because we do not know how great is their influence. Since we have neglected in many cases to translate democracy into a way of life for all the people of the nation, and we fear therefore, the effect of the promise of better things, even when those promises are not backed up by performance. But before I say any more, I believe Mr. Grauer has a message for us. (59:05)

[Ben Grauer:] I have, Mrs. Roosevelt, and briefly it's this: Ladies, in these warm, tiring days we need rest and relaxation more than ever. So, when the woes of the weather get you down, try this: relax in a refreshing tub or shower with friendly SweetHeart Soap. Let SweetHeart's pure, delicately fragrant lather cover you from head to foot. Notice how soothing it feels, how gently and thoroughly it cleanses. As you rinse it away and pat yourself dry, your skin feels soft and smooth, glowing all over with clean radiance. You'll feel like a new person, ready to tackle the world again. But remember, it's SweetHeart Soap that

gives you these wonderfully effective, yet amazingly gentle baths and clean-ups. So be sure you get genuine SweetHeart Soap. Accept no substitute when you ask for it. And now, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt returns to the microphone. (1:00:05)

[ER:] Another correspondent asks what the ordinary woman with limited time and talents can do to become a better citizen. The question of better citizenship for men and women is tied up today in their minds with the world's situation. Almost every woman I know is marking time until she can really feel that the government has called upon her to do some specific job into which she can throw all her energies. Perhaps the first thing to do, however, is to see to it that we remain calm, poised, and continue to do the things which are routine daily tasks. For instance, I think it is important today, that a child returning from school should find a poised, calm mother to whom to bring joys and sorrows, and not one who is jittery and frightened and who takes him convulsively in her arms and talks to him of the dangers which lurk on every side.

I think it is vitally important that we face the present world situation with reality, and consider all the possibilities and probabilities of our future. These have been put before us and will be put before us more and more clearly by the president and responsible people in the government. We owe it not only to ourselves, but to the world to preserve our democracy and its freedoms, and we can do it by thinking our problems through calmly and sanely. We cannot do it if we become hysterical and frightened. We probably have a fifth column in this country, and we do not know where it is or who it is, but we cannot all appoint ourselves unofficial agents to persecute people whom we suspect. There is a properly constituted branch of the government, the Department of Justice, to which any citizen or alien for that matter, can report anxieties and to which they can apply for protection which our laws have assured us.

We must do all we can to prevent the rise of racial or religious hatred in this country, and I feel that much of this calm assurance of spirit must come from the women. It is obvious to me that this is a long-time job and it will require the cooperation of men, women, and young people all over this country. It may seem to you that a racial or religious prejudice which does not touch you is something about which you need not concern yourself, but unfortunately, these prejudices do not stay within the bounds of any one category. The feeling spreads and one prejudice engenders another, and a people soon find themselves a prey to fears of all kinds. This means that we must not believe all the rumors which are spread, and that we should make every effort to find out the truth before we allow ourselves to become too greatly concerned.

I have heard many fantastic stories about myself and my family, and I've never been able to discover their beginnings, and I'm sure that nearly everyone else has had the same experiences. It's far more important to weigh everything you read and hear today in order not to be a party to any injustice or unfairness. The history of what has happened in some countries in Europe should be a terrible example to us. We've proved that we can live in this country in peace with many different racial and religious groups, and we must keep that before us if we hope to prove to the world that the democratic way of life is far superior to any other. (103:56)

[Ben Grauer:] Thank you very much, Mrs. Roosevelt. Friends, summer is one time when halfway soaps won't do. SweetHeart Soap's famous combination of thoroughness plus gentleness plus mild delightful fragrance goes all the way to help you look your loveliest. It's thorough, so your SweetHeart bath leaves you really clean, with no clinging surface impurities to make skin look dull and older. It's gentle, so the many extra baths and clean-ups you need in summer needn't be hard on your skin. And SweetHeart's lovely fragrance lingers to help you keep flower fresh these long, hot, summer days. Yet with all its benefits, with all that it offers you and your family, pure SweetHeart Soap costs surprisingly little. Just a very few pennies buys a big, long-lasting oval cake. Make SweetHeart Soap your summer beauty soap. Begin today, and see if you don't say, "There's no other soap like it."

And now it's time to say au revoir for today to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Mrs. Roosevelt comes to call again next Tuesday at this same time and station and you and your friends are cordially invited to be with us. Meantime, treat yourself to the fine product that brings you these programs: SweetHeart Soap, [theme music begins softly] famous for fifty years as the soap that agrees with your skin. We'll be looking for you next Tuesday, then, when you'll again hear [music crescendos, cuts] *Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt's own program*. This is Ben Grauer speaking. (1:05:32)

[NBC Announcer:] This is the National Broadcasting Company.

[NBC chimes]

(1:05:46)

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