

HONORABLE BELLA ABZUG

Former Congresswoman & Co-Chair,
Women's Environment & Development Organization
New York, New York



Bella Abzug has had the courage and the fortitude to blast open doors and to forge the way for other women. Her entire career has been spent at the vanguard of issues and movements in her quest for full equality for all. She was the first to vote for the Equal Rights Amendment, the first to introduce bills on child care, abortion rights, Gay rights, rehabilitation for Vietnam veterans, and the first to dedicate women's concerns toward saving our planet.

Rejected by Harvard Law School in the 1940's because they did not accept women, she obtained a scholarship to Columbia University Law School as one of the first handful of women to attend that law school. As a civil rights and labor lawyer throughout the 1950's and 1960's, she defended victims of racism and McCarthyism, and led campaigns against nuclear testing and the Vietnam war. At age 50, she ran for national office.

With her slogan, "This woman's place is in the House - House of Representatives," Ms. Abzug became the first woman elected to Congress on a women's rights/peace platform. She served from 1971 to 1977 and was chosen by her

Congressional peers in a U.S. News and World Report survey as the "third most influential" member of the House. In 1977, a Gallup Poll described her as one of the 20 most influential women in the world.

In 1980, Ms. Abzug helped organize the Women USA Fund, Inc. which was dedicated to women's concerns and became involved in a world-wide environmental effort. This prompted the creation of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). As co-chair, Ms. Abzug conceived and presided over numerous women's conferences throughout the world. In September 1995, she will be part of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Last year, Ms. Abzug was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame, in Seneca Falls, New York, where the first women's rights meeting was held in 1848. Her name was added to the prestigious list of other leaders of the American women's movement.

Ms. Abzug graduated from Hunter College and earned her law degree from Columbia University Law School (1944). She is a widow and has two daughters.