



## Eleanor vs. Ike

By Robin Gerber  
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### Introduction

It is a time of turmoil, with the nation mired in an unpopular war in Korea and with Senator Joseph McCarthy stirring up fear of a lurking Communist "menace." Racial discrimination is rampant. A woman's place is in the home. And when a shocking act of God eliminates the Democratic presidential nominee, the party throws its support to an unlikely standard bearer: former First Lady and goodwill ambassador to the world Eleanor Roosevelt.

Captivating and fast-paced, *Eleanor vs. Ike* pits the unforgettable Eleanor against the enormously popular war hero Gen. Dwight David ("Ike") Eisenhower. But while the opponents promise "an honest campaign," their strategists mire the race in scandal and bitter innuendo. Suddenly Eleanor finds herself a target of powerful insiders who mean to destroy her good name—and Ku Klux Klan assassins dedicated to her death—as she gets caught up in a mad whirl of appearances and political

maneuvering . . . and a chance encounter with a precocious five-year-old named Hillary Rodham.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Could a woman have been elected President in 1952? Would you have a different opinion if it were Eleanor Roosevelt, in other words, can certain women transcend gender?
2. Do Eleanor's reasons for not running for President ring true?
3. Why was Eleanor so insecure about her relationship with David?
4. How good a candidate was Ike?
5. What are the parallels between the issues of 1952 and today?
6. Should the Republican candidate in 2008 try to sideline President Bush as Eleanor does with Truman during the campaign?
7. How important was Eleanor's relationship with FDR to her decision to run?
8. Is Hillary Clinton another Eleanor Roosevelt?
9. How would Eleanor's election have affected future women candidates?
10. How would the country be changed by having a woman President?

### About the Author

Robin Gerber is a political columnist, commentator, and the author of *Leadership the Eleanor Roosevelt Way: Timeless Strategies from the First Lady of Courage* and *Katharine Graham: The Leadership Journey of an American Icon*. Robin frequently speaks on women in politics and leadership and has appeared on radio and television and writing opinions on these topics.

Robin spent more than a decade working on Capitol Hill, both as a congressional staff member and as a government affairs director for two major national organizations. She is also a lawyer and a senior faculty member for the Gallup Organization, as well as a senior fellow in Executive Education at the Robert H. Smith School of Business, University of MD, College Park. A member of the Board of Contributors for the opinion pages of *USA Today* and a columnist for *Reader's Digest*, she has been a commentator on NPR's "Marketplace and Morning Edition," and has appeared on "The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer" and dozens of radio talk shows. She lives in Bethesda, Maryland.