

**The Honorable Yvonne Brathwaite Burke**  
U.S. Representative of California (1973–1979)

**Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

**"I Was Me"**

Representative Burke discusses her behavior, appearance, and relationships with other Congresswomen like Bella Abzug of New York.

*Interview recorded July 22, 2015*

I really didn't try to change my whole appearance or my demeanor, and many people, you know, have questioned that. I was never a firebrand. I was always a person who was kind of low-key. I took always a lot of pride in my ability to bring people together, to compromise issues, to negotiate issues. I was always direct. I was—I was me. And I looked as I wanted to look. I did not try to meet anyone else's requirements in terms of my appearance and also my appearance in terms of the public. If there was an issue I felt strongly about, I articulated that issue. I was never a screamer, and I was never one who was really combative. And in my case, I found that it was okay, and I never criticized anyone who was combative. Bella and I got along famously, and we were on the same committee. At first, when I got there, we were on Public Works, and I became really very friendly. In fact, Bella and her husband became friendly with my husband and I. So, she had a different format. She was a different persona, but we certainly got along very well.