

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

Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress

Women and the Civil Rights Movement

Representative Burke remembers women's involvement in the civil rights movement.
Interview recorded July 22, 2015

It was mixed. It was a male movement. There were people in the civil rights movement who were very critical of women who were going places and traveling around. And then, of course, there was a time where there was a great deal of criticism of women from the point of view of, well when there was, Malcolm X was involved. And, they talk about women who had lipstick on and straightened hair. Even though there were times I had straightened hair, there were times I had a big afro. So, but there was considerable discussion of whether or not it was a time for men to evolve. And within African Americans, that was a little bit different than in the greater community. There was a feeling that men had been kept back, that men need to evolve in terms of the political system, and the whole business system, and the civil rights movement.