



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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## Senator Jeff Klein, Congressman Eliot Engel, Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz, Councilman Andrew Cohen, Local Community Members Celebrate & Honor Life of Bess Myerson

JEFFREY D. KLEIN April 20, 2015

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### *Dedication Ceremony at Sholem Aleichem Houses Honors Legendary Bronxite*

**BRONX, NY** - State Senator Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/Westchester), joined by Congressman Eliot Engel (D-Bronx/Westchester), Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz (D-Bronx), Councilman Andrew Cohen (D-Bronx), Esther Nelson, and a bevy of local community members, friends and neighbors, celebrated and honored the life of legendary Bronxite Bess Myerson at the Sholem Aleichem

Houses in Kingsbridge on Sunday, April 19th. Myerson, a historic figure in the Bronx, was named Miss America in 1945, served as New York City's first commissioner of consumer affairs, and later as an adviser to presidents Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter.

The dedication ceremony was held in the courtyard at the Sholem Aleichem houses where Senator Klein unveiled a Senate resolution commemorating Myerson's life and work. Guests gathered together to both reflect on and pay tribute to Myerson's legacy and leadership.

"Bess Myerson paved the way for countless women in New York and across the country, breaking down barriers and transcending government, politics, and pageantry by serving as not only the first Jewish Miss America, but the city's first commissioner of consumer affairs. Her life was a shining example of what one person can do to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others and she is sorely missed," **said Senator Jeff Klein.** "Today, we celebrate Bess' life and work -- acknowledging the immense contributions she has made to the Bronx and New York City."

"Bess Myerson was a true trailblazer in everything she did. From humble beginnings in the Bronx, Bess rose to incredible heights, and became among other things, a Miss America pageant winner and a political icon," **said Congressman Eliot Engel.** "Bess' life was a true Bronx success story, and she is most deserving of this honor and recognition."

"Bess Myerson was a trailblazer and leading citizen in our community who grew up in the Sholem Aleichem Houses here in my district," **said Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz.** "While she's perhaps best known for being the first Jewish Miss America, Bess Myerson had a distinguished career in government, serving as a commissioner of the New York City Departments of Consumer Affairs and Cultural Affairs and as an advisor to three presidents. She left a deep impression on many people and her presence is missed. It is an honor to recognize her contributions today."

Bess Myerson was born in 1924 in the Bronx. She grew up in the historic Sholem Aleichem Housing Cooperative, a working-class development in the northwest Bronx known for its Jewish roots and heavy population of artists, poets and musicians. Myerson attended the High School of Music and Art and then went on to study music at Hunter College, graduating with honors in 1945.

That same year, Myerson was named the first Jewish Miss America. Throughout her reign, she used her platform to combat anti-semitism and speak out against discrimination and prejudice. In 1969, Myerson was name New York City's first commissioner of consumer affairs under Mayor John Lindsay. She later went on to serve as commissioner of cultural affairs, advise three presidents, and ran for U.S. Senate in 1980.

"Bess was a true friend and confidant. Her shining spirit, beauty, talent and intelligence were an inspiration to us all and a constant reminder of how we could do better and make a difference in this world," **said Esther Nelson, long-time friend and neighbor of Bess Myerson.** "Her grand presence, fiery spirit and authenticity are sorely missed."

"I am proud to have grown up in the same apartment complex as Bess Myerson and her achievements offer inspiration to all from our community," **said Dan Padernacht, Chair of Community Board 8.** "The close knit community in which Bess Myerson was raised still exists today."