

# Conversations With Abner Mikva: Exploring His Impact on American Politics

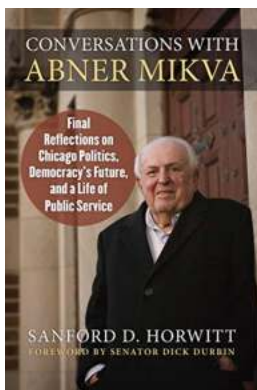
## The Legacy of Abner Mikva

Abner Mikva, a prominent figure in American politics, has left a lasting impact on our nation's governance and legal system. Throughout his remarkable career, Mikva served as a congressman, federal judge, and White House counsel, dedicating himself to upholding justice, advocating for progressive causes, and paving the way for future generations of public servants.

## Early Life and Education

Born on January 21, 1926, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Abner J. Mikva grew up in a family of Ukrainian Jewish immigrants. His parents instilled in him a sense of importance in education, which propelled him to excel academically. Mikva later attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he became involved in student politics, advocating for civil rights and social justice.

After graduating with honors, Mikva went on to pursue a law degree from the University of Chicago Law School. This decision would mark the beginning of a journey that would ultimately shape the course of American politics.



## Conversations with Abner Mikva: Final Reflections on Chicago Politics, Democracy's Future, and a Life of Public Service by Anand Prahlad (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 6118 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 273 pages



## **A Rising Political Star**

Following his graduation, Mikva began practicing law in Chicago and quickly gained recognition for his legal acumen and commitment to equal rights. In 1956, he won his first political campaign, securing a position in the Illinois State House of Representatives.

Throughout his tenure in the state legislature, Mikva established himself as a progressive force, championing civil rights, fair housing laws, and fighting against corruption. His unwavering principles and dedication to his constituents propelled him to higher offices.

## **U.S. Congress and the Mikva Challenge**

In 1969, Mikva was elected to the United States Congress, representing Illinois' 2nd congressional district. During his nine years as a congressman, he played a pivotal role in shaping legislation on issues such as campaign finance reform, consumer protection, and environmental conservation.

One of Mikva's most notable achievements was his role in co-founding the Congressional Caucus on Ethics. This groundbreaking initiative aimed to address corruption and improper conduct among members of Congress, highlighting his commitment to restoring public trust in the political system.

After leaving Congress in 1979, Mikva continued his journey of public service, serving as a federal judge in the United States Court of Appeals for the District of

Columbia Circuit. His judicial career was marked by fair and impartial decision-making, ensuring justice for those who came before him.

Furthermore, Mikva's passion for civic education led him to establish the Mikva Challenge, a nonprofit organization dedicated to engaging young people in the political process. Through various programs and initiatives, the Mikva Challenge continues to inspire the next generation of leaders.

## **White House Counsel and Presidential Advisor**

President Bill Clinton recognized Abner Mikva's exceptional legal expertise, appointing him as White House Counsel in 1994. In this role, Mikva provided legal advice to the President and played an instrumental role in shaping significant policies and initiatives.

Mikva's valuable counsel and commitment to justice earned him the respect and admiration of his colleagues. He became a trusted advisor, working tirelessly to promote progressive causes, such as gun control and LGBT rights.

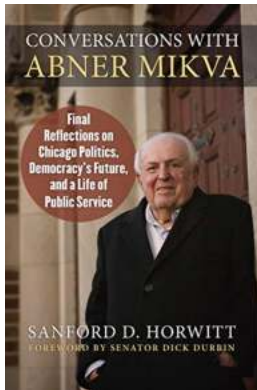
## **A Lasting Impact**

Abner Mikva passed away on July 4, 2016, at the age of 90, leaving behind a legacy of integrity, progressive values, and a dedication to public service.

His impact on American politics resonates to this day, inspiring countless individuals to engage in activism and strive for a more equitable society. Mikva's commitment to justice, equal rights, and the empowerment of young people continues to shape the United States' political landscape.

As we remember and reflect on Abner Mikva's contributions to our nation, his words remind us of the ongoing importance of public service: "Democracies are

not spectator sports. You have to get involved. It's not enough to vote. You have to be informed, and be an active voice in your community."



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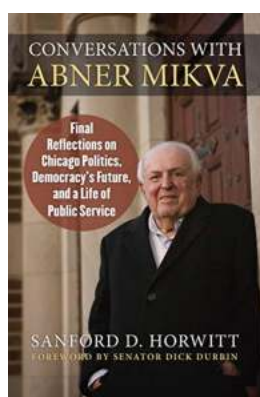
It was 1948 when Abner Mikva, fresh out of college, volunteered at the 8th Ward Democratic headquarters in Chicago. “Who sent you, kid?” the leery ward committeeman asked. “Nobody,” Mikva said, and the man informed him, “We don’t want nobody nobody sent.” That marked the beginning of Abner Mikva’s storied political career, which would take him to the Illinois Statehouse, the US House of Representatives, the DC Circuit Court of Appeals, and the Clinton White House—culminating in a Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by a young politician he had mentored, Barack Obama.

Around that time, eighty-seven years old and in declining health but as wise and wry as ever, Mikva sat down with his former speechwriter and longtime friend Sanford Horwitt for the first of the conversations recorded in this book. Separated by a generation, but with two lifetimes’ worth of experience between them, the

friends met monthly to talk about life, politics, and the history that Mikva saw firsthand—and often had a hand in making.

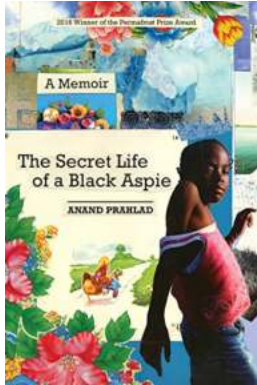
Conversations with Abner Mikva lets us listen in as the veteran political reformer and unreconstructed liberal reflects on the world as it was, how it's changed, what it means, and what really matters. Speaking in no uncertain terms, but with an unerring instinct for the comic, Mikva has something to say—and something well worth hearing—about his bouts with the Daley political machine, the NRA, and the Nazis who marched in Skokie. Whether recalling his work as a judge on civil rights, describing his days as White House counsel, decrying the most activist Supreme Court since the Civil War, expounding on our rigged political system, or assessing the Obama presidency, Mikva is eloquent, deeply informed, and endlessly interesting. And finally, in this intimate and unfiltered encounter, he remains an optimist, inspired and inspiring to the very end of a remarkable life of public service.

In 2016, at the age of ninety, Abner Mikva died on the Fourth of July.



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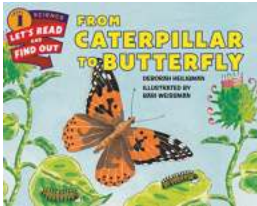
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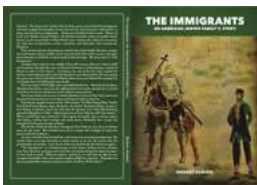
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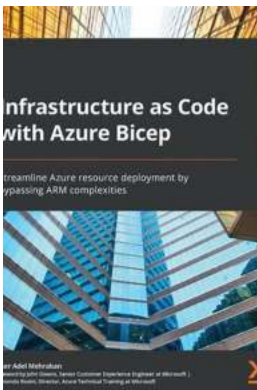
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