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"The American dream is about freedom."

Nancy Pelosi, 2012 Democratic National Convention

How do I begin to write about a woman whose achievements and accolades could fill a book? Here are just a few reasons why Nancy Pelosi is one of my favorite heroes, both personally and professionally.

The first woman (and mother and grandmother!) to serve as Speaker of the House of Representatives, she is the highest-ranking female elected official in U.S. history - second in the presidential line of succession after the vice president. Pelosi famously remarked, "Being the first woman speaker and breaking the marble ceiling is fine. Now it's time to move on."

When elected House minority whip in 2001, she became the first woman in U.S. history to hold that post. She is currently in her 18th term as a California congresswoman.