

# Ava Peron



Eva Peron served as Argentina's First lady from 1946 to 1952. Eva Peron or 'Evita' became a powerful political figure with a large support base amongst the poor and working-class trade union members. She inspired millions with her campaigns to help the poor and give women the right to vote. To her supporters, she was a saint who strove to overcome poverty and injustice. To her detractors (in the nation's military and bourgeoisie) she was a controversial figure at the heart of Argentinian politics.

Eva Peron was born in rural poverty in a town called Los Toldos. She was the illegitimate daughter of a failed landowner. Aged fifteen, she left her rural home to go to Buenos Aires where she hoped to pursue her theatrical career. Aided by her natural beauty she gained work in the theatre. In Buenos Aires, she also began campaigning for women to be given the vote and to deal with the widespread poverty endemic in Argentina. She caught the eye of a prominent politician, Juan Domingo Peron, and in 1945 they were married and six months later she became President Peron's, First Lady.

Her high profile, beauty and concern for the poor galvanized the nation. The dispossessed saw her as a savior. The military and upper echelons of society saw her as a threat. They criticized her professed concern for the poor as a way to gain political support for her husband. Her supporters dispute these assertions of her enemies, arguing the military and political opponents were merely trying to tarnish her image. In 1952 she was given the title of 'spiritual chief of the nation'. Six months later, in 1952, she died tragically young from cancer.

The story of her life was made into the hit musical *Evita* by Andrew Lloyd Weber and Tim Rice. July 2012, Eva Peron was honored on the 60th anniversary of her death by having her image placed on the 100 peso bank note in Argentina.