

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

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DOCUMENT NO. AND TYPE	SUBJECT/TITLE	DATE	RESTRICTION
001. bio	re: Karla Wittkop Rocha [partial] (1 page)	n.d.	b(6)
002. bio	re: Wesley Ann Godard [partial] (1 page)	n.d.	b(6)

COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
First Lady's Office
Melanne Verveer
OA/Box Number: 20020

FOLDER TITLE:

Argentina

2013-0534-S

rc1498

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
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PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

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AS PREPARED

*file
Argentina*

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE WOMEN OF ARGENTINA
COLON THEATER
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA
OCTOBER 16, 1997**

PARTICIPANTS IN EVENT AT COLON THEATRE
October 16, 1997

Greeters

Mrs. Inés Pertiné de de la Rúa
Wife of the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires

Mrs. María Sáenz Quesada
Secretary of Culture of the Government of the City of Buenos Aires

Mrs. Diana Custodio de Guelar
Wife of the Argentine Ambassador to the United States

Mr. Kive Staiff
General Director, Colón Theatre

On-Stage Participants

(In order of placement from stage left)

Ambassador Zelmira Regazzoli
Under Secretary for Human Rights and Women's Issues, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Mrs. Wesley Ann Godard
Wife of the Charge d'Affaires, Embassy of the United States, Buenos Aires

Mrs. Ester Aída Schiavoni
President, National Women's Council

Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton
First Lady of the United States

Mrs. Inés Pertiné de de la Rúa
Wife of the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires

Ambassador Alicia Martínez Ríos
Argentine Ambassador to the Organization of American States

**PARTICIPANTS IN MEETING WITH
THE GRANDMOTHERS OF PLAZA DE MAYO**

**Colon Theatre
October 16, 1997**

Enriqueta Estela Barnes de Carlotto, President of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo:

On November 26, 1977, her daughter, **Laura Estela**, disappeared. Her granddaughter was born in prison on June 22, 1978. Mrs. Carlotto became vice president of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo the same year, and currently serves as president. She represents the organization in international fora and has written several articles for Argentine and international publications on human rights in general and the activities of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo in particular.

Rosa Tarlovsky de Roisinblit, Vice President of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo:

On October 6, 1978, her daughter, **Patricia Julia Roisinblit**, and her son-in-law, **José Manuel Perez**, were kidnaped by security forces who identified themselves as members of the federal police. **Patricia** was eight months pregnant. According to persons who were with her in captivity, she gave birth on November 15, 1978 in the concentration camp which was operated at the Mechanical School of the Army. They continue to figure among those who disappeared.

Raquel Radío de Marizcurrena, Pro-Secretary of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo:

Her son, **Andrés Marizcurrena**, and her daughter-in-law, **Liliana Beatriz Caimi**, were kidnaped on October 11, 1976 in Martínez (Province of Buenos Aires) by personnel dressed in civilian clothes, who identified themselves as members of the federal police. **Liliana** was five months pregnant. The young couple and their son continue to figure among those who disappeared.

Berta Schubaroff, Treasurer of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo:

On August 24, 1976 **María Claudia García Irureta Goyena** and **Marcelo Ariel Gelman** were kidnaped from their residence in the Federal Capital. The young woman was seven months pregnant. The birth must have taken place between October 20 and November 6, 1976. **María Claudia and her baby son** still figure among those who disappeared. The skeletal remains of **Berta's son Ariel** were identified. He had been murdered. His body was thrown into a 200-liter tank in the waters of the San Fernando Channel.

Amelia Herrera de Miranda, Pro-Treasurer of the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo:

Her grandchildren, **Roberto and Barbara**, disappeared on September 4, 1976, along with their parents, **Roberto Francisco Lanuscou and Barbara Miranda**, and her six-month old sister, **Matilde Lanuscou**. **Roberto, Barbara, and their parents** were found dead and were buried as "non-identified" in January 1984. A tomb with **Matilde's** clothes was discovered -- apparently an effort to simulate her death so as to stop the search for her. This child is still among those who disappeared.

Antonia Acuña de Segarra, Member of the Board of the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo: Her daughter, **Laura Beatriz Segarra**, and her son-in-law, **Pablo Torres**, were kidnaped on June 23, 1978 in Merlo (Province of Buenos Aires). The residence was attacked by security forces, who left only one wall of the house standing. The young woman was nine months pregnant, with just a few days to go before giving birth. They all still figure among those who disappeared. Her other daughter, **Alicia Estela Segarra**, and her son-in-law, **Carlos María Mendoza**, were kidnaped on the street on June 21, 1978. **Alicia** was two-and-a-half months pregnant. They still figure among those who disappeared.

The "Dirty War" and
the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo

In 1976 President Isabel Peron, the widow of former President Juan Peron, was overthrown in a military coup amid rising violence by leftist guerrilla groups. Leftist violence gave way to rightist violence as the military rounded up thousands of suspected guerrillas in what was termed the "dirty war" against leftist subversion. Most of these people simply disappeared and are presumed to have been murdered.

Democratic government was restored in 1983, following the disastrous Argentine defeat in the Falklands War. A National Commission on Disappeared Persons (CONADEP) was formed. Relying on public testimony (the military authorities left no records), CONADEP compiled a list of nearly 9,000 disappeared persons. Most reliable estimates place the number of disappeared between 10,000 and 15,000.

Certain military officers responsible for the atrocities of the "dirty war" were tried and sentenced, but benefitted from pardons issued by President Menem in 1989 and 1990.

The Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo (*Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo*) is a nonpartisan, nongovernmental human rights organization founded in 1977. Its mission is to ascertain the parentage of children born in captivity during the military dictatorship. It is privately supported and has in the past received grants from U.S. donors, including the Ford Foundation. It works closely with the University of Washington in Seattle, where a genetic data bank is maintained to help trace the parentage of children across the generation gap to their grandparents. A similar, though much more extensive, genetic data bank is maintained in Buenos Aires.

The Grandmothers also work closely with the Under Secretariat for Human and Social Rights of the Ministry of the Interior of Argentina. This office has custody of the voluminous records of the National Commission on Disappeared Persons.

The Grandmothers are organizationally independent from the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, also founded in 1977 to demand an accounting of the disappeared. The Mothers have split into two subgroups, one of which has become increasingly politicized. Wearing their trademark white headscarves, the Mothers continue to demonstrate once a week in the Plaza de Mayo, the square facing Government House (*Casa Rosada*) in Buenos Aires.

SCENE-SETTER: MRS. CLINTON

ARGENTINA:SPEECH AT THE COLON THEATER

The venue for your speech to Argentine women representing non-governmental organizations, business, government, journalism and the arts will be the Colon Theater. Upon your arrival at the Colon, Kive Staiff, Director General of the Theater, will greet and escort you to the Hector Panizza dressing room where you can make any last minute preparations prior to your speech. You will be received by the Embassy representative, Mrs. Wooley Godard, Wife of Charge d'Affaires Ronald Godard, who will introduce you to Ester Schiavoni, President of the Consejo Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Council), the organization which is co-sponsoring your speech.

From the dressing room, you will be escorted on stage by Mrs. Schiavoni and Mrs. Godard. Mrs. Schiavoni will make welcoming remarks followed by remarks and introduction by Mrs. Godard. Simultaneous translation will be provided.

At the conclusion of your speech of approximately 25 minutes, Mrs. Schiavoni will make closing remarks. You may either return to the dressing room for a few minutes to allow the audience to exit or proceed to "Salon Dorado" located on the theater's second level where a small reception (some 35 invitees) will be held in your honor. Following brief informal conversation with the guests and light refreshments, you will be escorted from the reception area by Mrs. Godard and Mrs. Schiavoni and depart the theater.

Background

Prior to its current location, the Colon Theater functioned from 1869 to 1899 on the site of what is now the Baneo de la Nacion Argentina. Following 18 years of continuous construction, the Colon Theater opened at its current location on May 25, 1908 with the inaugural performance of the opera "Aida." Since then, the colon has attracted prominent artists from the lyrical world and ranks as one of the world's renowned theaters. In 1931, the Municipality of the City of Buenos Aires took over the theater and continues to subsidize the theater and its resident companies out of public funds. The Colon offers a year-round program of opera, concerts and ballet. It has its own ballet corps, chorus, and a permanent cast of 60 lyrical artists. The Colon Theater permanent orchestra and the Philharmonic Orchestra each are composed of 97 musicians. The building is also renowned for its grandeur and magnificent architecture incorporating German, French, Italian, and Greek influences. The painting on the cupola, which was donated by the great Argentine painter Raul Solda, was unveiled in 1966 commemorating 160 years of Argentina's independence. The auditorium which is shaped like a horseshoe has seven floors. We anticipate seating approximately 1,000 guests at the orchestra level and the first three levels of boxes.

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Ms. Karla Wittkop Rocha

[001]

Born in 1960 in (b)(6) Karla Wittkop Rocha attended elementary and junior high school in Santo Domingo. She spent her final two years of secondary school at a private boarding school in Long Island, New York. Ms. Rocha graduated from the Catholic University of Santo Domingo with a degree in graphic design. She worked for American Airlines in Santo Domingo in a managerial supervisory position for fourteen years.

Ms. Rocha has participated as a lead dancer with the foremost modern dance troupe in the Dominican Republic, performing in numerous presentations in the nation's major theatre. She has competed in national marathon, cycling, and triathlon events. Ms. Rocha has traveled extensively in Europe, Japan, China, India, Egypt, Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico.

Ms. Rocha's husband is the Deputy Chief of Mission of the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires. Their previous post was Havana, Cuba.

Ms. María Sáenz Quesada

María Sáenz Quesada has been the Secretary of Culture of the City of Buenos Aires since 1996. A respected historian, she is the author of several biographies, including a work (published in 1996) on Mariquita Sánchez de Thompson, a 19th century patriot and leading woman of Argentine society. She has also written a book on the *estancias* (ranches) of Argentina. Ms. Sáenz Quesada has been the assistant editor of the magazine *Todo es Historia* (*Everything is History*) since 1985 and is a former director of the museum of the Casa Rosada (government house).

Ms. Sáenz Quesada holds a degree in history from Salvador University. She taught history at Belgrano University from 1978-92.

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WESLEY ANN GODARD

American Embassy, Buenos Aires, Argentina

[002]

Wesley Ann Godard was (b)(6) in

(b)(6) She graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1967 with a B.A. in history and English literature. Her plans to join the Peace Corps after graduation were derailed when the ex-Peace Corps Volunteer she met with to discuss his experiences eventually asked her to marry him and share his wandering life in the Foreign Service.

By 1970 Wesley Ann was a veteran Foreign Service spouse (actually they were called "wives" back then) having weathered a military coup, a counter-coup, four moves and countless cocktail parties, volunteered in a number of charities; given birth to her first child in a tiny maternity clinic 300 miles from the capital; and become fluent in Spanish.

She has served with her husband a total of 19 years in foreign posts including Panama City, David, Managua (twice), Istanbul, San Jose, Santiago and Buenos Aires. Over the years she has accumulated a houseful of battered, unmatched furniture and an eclectic resume. She has taught English as a second language, taken inventory, managed a commissary, written radio scripts, purchased residential property for the Foreign buildings Office, managed a small development fund; written a study of graduate programs in Chilean universities, coordinated a minority achievement program in an Arlington county public school, and written a guide to Managua.

After years abroad, she is thrilled to be returning to the Washington, D.C. area where she is looking forward to being in her own home without a staff. Her priorities are to expand her career as a free-lance writer and enjoy her family - especially her grown son and daughter and her two grandchildren.

Ms. Ester Aída Schiavoni

Ester Schiavoni has served as President of the National Women's Council since 1996. Previously, she was Cabinet Advisor in the Secretariat of Public Works. She has worked as a columnist for newspapers and magazines in the provinces of Rio Negro and Neuquen.

Born in 1945, Ms. Schiavoni has an undergraduate degree in humanities from the University of Comahue and a graduate degree in women's studies from the University of Buenos Aires. She has taught both subjects at the university level. She has two children and one grandchild.

Ms. Inés Pertiné de de la Rua

Ms. Inés de de la Rua is the wife of the Chief of Government of the City of Buenos Aires. She serves as honorary consultant for the Center for Studies of the Republic Foundation, an association whose emphasis is social work.

Born in 1942, Ms. de de la Rua has three children and one grandchild. She speaks English and French.

21ST STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

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August 23, 1990, Thursday, NORTH SPORTS FINAL EDITION

SECTION: TEMPO; Pg. 14; ZONE: C

LENGTH: 185 words

HEADLINE: Famed Argentine theater reopens after renovation

DATELINE: BUENOS AIRES

BODY:

Colon Theater, the world-renowned opera house, is back in business after a renovation and then labor disputes kept its stage almost bare for two seasons.

When the curtain belatedly went up on "Faust" in mid-July, moviemaker and Colon director Sergio Renan said with relief, "It was a kind of compensation for a lot of headaches."

The modernization of the lighting system, repair of the machine that rotates the sets, and other renovations were stretched out by Argentina's recession and inflation that nearly reached 5,000 percent in 1989. A short-lived production of "Aida" was performed last year in between repairs.

The fall season normally begins in April. However, 1990 subscriptions were initially refunded and "Faust" was pushed back. As the July 19 opening date drew near, opera and dance lovers wondered if the 82-year-old theater would be ready in time.

With special effects such as lightning and billowing smoke, the opera also gave the Colon a chance to show off its improvements, including a computer-controlled system to move sets up, down and sideways, quickly and quietly.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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Financial Times (London)

August 12, 1989, Saturday

SECTION: SECTION I; The Arts; Pg. XIV

LENGTH: 1457 words

HEADLINE: Whatever Happened To The Colon Theatre?

BYLINE: Gary Mead

HIGHLIGHT:

Gary Mead explains why there is no opera in Buenos Aires this year

BODY:

Aficionados claim that there are only three great opera houses in the world; the Metropolitan in New York, La Scala in Milan, and the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires. Opera has been performed every year at the Colon since its first night, May 25, 1908. The world's greatest singers once flocked to Buenos Aires, to confirm their status as international stars.

But not in 1988, nor in 1989. The Colon is silenced this year at last, except for a few orchestral concerts performed by local musicians. Attempting to unravel why this year's whole opera season was cancelled at short notice, after the advance sale of Dollars 500,000 worth of tickets, is a task more daunting than the explanation of a Wagnerian score to a country-and-western singer.

On the stage where Nijinsky danced and Dame Janet Sutherland sang, opera has died. This year's season was due to open on May 24 with a performance of Aida, which the Colon opened with in 1908. Deep beneath the stage Aida's glittering costumes and enormous statues of sphinxes are all ready to be hauled into place. But there will be no Aida this year; nor any Barber of Seville, nor Bluebeard's Castle, no Faust, and none of the other five operas featuring foreign stars, who have all been sent home. With a great deal of luck there may be the world debut in November of a (reputedly indifferent) work called Adonias, by the Argentine composer Alejandro Pinto.

The reasons why there is yet again no opera season at the Colon are as much a matter of dispute and mutual recrimination as Argentina's current economic collapse. But the faded glory which is Argentina has its perfect symbol in the Colon theatre: there is no more grandiose expression of Argentina's decay than its decline.

In the marbled entrance to the Colon is a small museum dedicated to the artists and performers who have appeared there. Amongst the fly-blown glass cabinets containing such priceless items as a 1909 self-caricature of Enrico Caruso and a fan from Madame Butterfly signed by Puccini, is a small black and white photograph of Waslaw Nijinski, alongside a copy of his marriage certificate. He married Romola de Pulszky in Buenos Aires on September 10, 1913.

Those romantic moments have long disappeared, sucked down into the mire of a bureaucratised state which is less interested in culture than political control. Control of the Colon is a political weapon, and the designation of its administration is in the hands of the mayor of Buenos Aires.

The Colon is owned by and directly responsible to the Municipality of Buenos Aires; it has four directors appointed by the Mayor; the Mayor, or Intendente, is appointed by Argentina's President; thus what happens at the Colon is ultimately a political and not aesthetic issue. Financed by, supervised by and finally, according to some, ruined by the municipality, the Colon has suffered along with the rest of the country from the political and economic turmoil since 1945.

On May 14 Argentina elected a new President, Carlos Menem. He took office on July 8 and within days hundreds of posts throughout Argentina changed hands. All four directors of the Colon were removed as the new mayor of Buenos Aires, Carlos Grosso, swept out all those appointed by the departing Radical party city administration and brought in people loyal to the victorious Peronist party.

In terms of the Colon this hand-over has merely exacerbated an already serious problem. Ricardo Szwarczer, as Director General of the Colon, was one of the many who, as a simple result of the political changes, was forced out. In 1987 he decided that the theatre needed urgent repairs to its rigging. Wooden floors running around the stage at 20 metres and above, used by technicians to pull scenery into and out of place, had not been touched since the theatre opened seven decades ago. The place was dangerous to work in.

Enzo Valenti-Ferro, himself a former director of the Colon, argued that Szwarczer had other reasons for deciding to begin the construction work. According to Valenti-Ferro, Szwarczer was tired of trade unions trying to bully the Colon's management into paying higher wages. He chose to kill two birds with one stone - get the Colon into better shape structurally and lay off stage-hands who were causing most of the trouble. Whatever the truth, opera was cancelled for 1988, and the work started.

The original budget is a matter of some speculation. Szwarczer said that it was projected at Dollars 4.7 m; but inflation has doubled each month since February this year and is now running at about 200 per cent a month. In that context, all talk of deadlines, contracts and material supplies is in fairyland, particularly when the materials have to be imported. "In March this year the municipality told me there was no more money available, that there were greater priorities, and that I had to cancel the opera season," said Szwarczer.

Even as the season was being cancelled, the Colon continued to accept payments for opera season tickets, which were on sale at roughly Dollars 50 per opera. Approximately Dollars 500,000 was collected, which was on deposit for three months in an account held by the municipality at the Banco de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires. Someone in the municipality has come out well; people are now having their money returned, when it has lost more than three-quarters of its value.

In the workshop where seamstresses put the finishing touches to Aida costumes - now reeking of mothballs - no-one is willing to answer the question why there is no opera at the Colon. "Cosas de arriba" (things from above) is the only response. People don't want to talk about it. All they know is that prices

Financial Times (London), August 12, 1989

have something to do with it. The basic material for Aida's costumes was imported from Japan. One metre cost 1,000 australs - the Argentinian currency - a year ago; now it is priced at 13,000 australs. One year ago a ballerina was earning Dollars 500 a month; now it's down to Dollars 80.

The accusations (from many quarters) that the work initiated under Szwarczer has been badly managed and is far from complete are wrong. Around three sides of the stage, five wooden cat-walks between 20 and 30 metres up have been ripped out and five new steel ones re-built in their places. New computerised machinery, operating pulleys from the rooftop, have been installed, with efficiency such that they can place backdrops to within half a centimetre of accuracy. The whole rigging structure, a masterpiece of civil engineering, the third largest metal construction work being undertaken in the Argentine republic (according to Szwarczer), is impressive and makes the Colon one of the most modern in the world, in that respect.

What is far from modern are the plagues which the Colon is suffering in terms of management relations and morale. Stage-hands who suspended their work after the first act of a performance of Otello in 1987, who have been laid off during the construction work, have got nothing from their dispute. The new management has now to try and solve the Colon's lingering union and economic problems.

Szwarczer's replacement, Sergio Renan, has promised to form a commission to investigate the time and money needed by the theatre before it can fully re-open, which seems rather like looking into a well to see how deep it is. He has also promised to "stimulate national (ie Argentine) artists, who very often feel overlooked for mediocre foreigners." Renan, appointed by the new Peronist administration, has had a successful career as a film actor. It is thought he might be interested in taking the Colon more down-market than some of his predecessors, most of whom have at least been trained in classical music.

For some, the slide downwards started on July 8 when President Carlos Menem attended a gala concert in celebration at his being inaugurated that day as Argentina's 46th President. Normally an evening dress affair, the Colon that night was packed with the cheap glitterati of TV quiz-game hostesses and football stars, not normally given to visiting the Colon but the sort of company generally favoured by the new leader. They dazzled the night with an array of sequined schmaltz, and trod lightly on the 20 metre wide new red carpet which someone in the municipality had found enough money to lay for the event. After that the Colon went back to its current torpor.

Those Argentines disappointed this year at not being able to listen to and watch over 100 foreign artists booked for the cancelled opera season - no doubt some of them far from mediocre, even by Renan's standards - will swallow their disappointment and think twice about trusting those newly in charge of the Colon.

GRAPHIC: Picture Teatro Colon, all the foreign opera stars have been sent home

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

Acknowledgments:...and all the mothers in the audience on the eve of Mother's Day -- I am deeply honored to be with you and to be in Argentina.

I must confess that it is awe-inspiring to be in this magnificent theater, to stand on a stage that has been graced by the likes of Enrico Caruso and Maria Callas. I am almost tempted to sing. In the interests of preserving the warm and historic ties between our two countries, however, I will refrain.

But I would like to talk about powerful voices. The voices of women in our hemisphere and what we can do to make them heard -- about our shared commitment to advancing the cause of women's rights, advancing the cause of democracy, and making clear that the two are inseparable.

I can think of no better place to do this than in Argentina. The women of Argentina have long been pioneers on the frontiers of human rights and equality.

From the Argentine Beneficent Society to the National Women's Council to the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo -- with whom I will meet shortly -- you and your forebears have forged a remarkable record of speaking up in your communities, caring for those who cannot help themselves, opening the doors of education to boys and girls, lifting up lives and voices for democracy and human rights.

We are pursuing our goals of equality at a moment in history that is full of hope, a time ripe for positive social change. Countries that were once paralyzed by debt or runaway inflation have embarked on tough reforms -- and now they are on the move.

Economic renewal has been accompanied by democratic transformation. Across the Americas, military dictatorships have given way to freely elected governments. For the first time in decades, millions of people enjoy the right to choose their own leaders, to engage actively in political life, to speak frankly, to meet in support or opposition to a cause, and to form opinions based on information gathered by a free and inquiring press.

Democracy, whether newly rooted or centuries old, is fragile. The process of building and tending it is on-going. Democracy flourishes when its principles are internalized in the hearts and minds of all people; when no one fears the consequences of standing up or speaking out for justice. And democracy thrives when women are not barred by law, by ignorance, by tradition, or by intimidation from making their voices heard at the ballot box, from pursuing their most cherished dreams.

In short, empowering ever-more women to seek and claim their rights as citizens and as human beings will ensure that democracies -- old and new - - survive and thrive in the 21st century.

The word “empowerment,” I am told, does not translate well. But I am sure that every woman in this room knows its meaning. Empowerment means the right to participate in the political and economic life of our countries. Empowerment means being able to lead lives free of sexual and domestic violence. And it means access to justice under law, to education, to health care, to credit and property ownership.

Empowering women means making sure our voices are heard and that we are treated as full citizens in our countries.

No nation can hope to succeed in our global economy if half of its people lack the opportunity and the right to make the most of their God-given promise. And, as we can all attest, in too many countries, my own as well, too many rights are denied and too many doors of opportunity remain tightly closed.

Too many women and children are trapped either in an endless cycle of poverty -- a cycle perpetuated by inadequate health care, poor access to family planning, and limited education -- or inside social constructs that impoverish their spirits and limit their dreams.

Too many women are unable to participate in the economic lives of their countries because they cannot get credit to start small businesses.

Too many women live in fear of violence at the hands of family members. For them, home provides no refuge, the law no protection, and public opinion no sympathy.

Too many women, especially those who are poor and less educated, are unaware of their legal rights in the workplace, of their rights to own and inherit property, of their rights to vote and choose their leaders. While these laws may exist on the books, too many governments have not enforced them and too few women have been made aware of them.

These problems may be daunting, but their solutions are in full view. Across the Americas, from Boston to Buenos Aires, there are cutting-edge, common-sense initiatives to give girls and women access to what I call the tools of opportunity: education, decent health care, legal protections, and credit. These efforts prove that women can be empowered to lift themselves, their children, families, and communities out of poverty.

Let me begin with **education**, for nothing outside the family is more central to advancing the cause of girls and women. And Argentina has long recognized that fact.

Our two nations have a history of warm ties. One of the most notable was the friendship between Horace Mann, the father of public education in the United States, and President Domingo Sarmiento, the father of education in Argentina, who was ahead of his time with his deeply held belief that girls should attend school.

The fruits of his conviction are there for the world to see today: In Argentina's strong and established system of education. In a literacy rate of 96 percent. And in a primary school completion rate of 90 percent.

Other countries in the Americas are rededicating themselves to improving access to and the quality of education for all their citizens. Education will be the centerpiece of the Second Summit of the Americas in Santiago next April, which will highlight models that are working.

Yesterday in Sao Paolo, for example, I visited an elementary school in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. For years, the school struggled. Many students were not learning or even staying in school. Fortunately, the business community, recognizing the importance of education, got involved, and created the Institute for Quality Education. Working with the local government, they have transformed the school. Teachers who themselves may not have finished high school received training. Students were tested. Parents were encouraged to get involved. In less than a year, test scores in mathematics and languages went up more than 200 percent. Even in countries like ours, with higher levels of education, we have to do more to improve quality in both urban and rural areas and to ensure that all students have access to information technology.

Another tool of opportunity is Microenterprise, which provides modest loans to people -- mostly women -- who would not otherwise receive them.

I have seen all over the world how access to credit, which sparks a woman's entrepreneurial spirit, transforms lives. I would like to share with you two brief stories from the last few days.

In Panama, I visited a group of women who, with a small grant from the United States Agency for International Development, started a business growing plants and seedlings to sell in city markets and to the Panamanian government's reforestation programs. Within two years, the women had sold enough orchids, medicinal plants and seedlings to expand their business; their seedlings have restored 48 acres in one of Panama's national parks: and they were using their new income to improve their homes and send their children to school.

I met an equally impressive group of women when I visited another microlending institution in Caracas, Venezuela. The rather ordinary-looking building I entered did nothing to prepare me for the open-air rooftop terrace where we sat and talked. The space was spotless and lovingly cared for. The walls were adorned with weavings and art works the women had made.

As a light breeze blew in, one woman told me of the thriving taxi company she had started with a loan from the organization. She said that when she finally got her own business it was as if “the sky had opened up.” Another woman had received a loan to expand the empanada and juice stand she ran with her husband. Now they had a restaurant and a butcher shop employing 10 people. They had even been able to send one of their children to university. She said that the loan had given her the opportunity to “spread her wings.”

The women I met in Venezuela and Panama were impressive, but not unique. There are similar women all over the Americas. I have met them in Nicaragua, in Costa Rica, in Bolivia, in Chile, in Mexico, and in my own country. And I know they are here in Argentina as well. Because a real job is the best form of social welfare, microenterprise works for the individual and the society.

Access to quality **health care**, especially family planning and reproductive health services, is also crucial to advancing the progress of women.

Two days ago in Brazil, I witnessed the signing of an agreement between my government and two Brazilian state governments to support a family planning initiative.

I first encountered the project when I visited a maternity hospital in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil two years ago. Men and women were getting the information that would enable them to make wise choices about planning their families. Mothers were receiving pre-natal and post-partum care. Infants were getting immunizations. Parents were being taught what to feed their young children and how to care for them. In short, family planning and reproductive health programs were integrated into maternal and child health services. Those with the least access and the highest risk were reached.

The result? Rates of maternal mortality and abortion decreased. Population growth and infant mortality rates went down, as well.

This is such a successful approach that the hemisphere-wide strategy to reduce maternal mortality, which was announced at the First Ladies of the Americas Conference in La Paz last year, is modeled after the work done in Brazil.

The promotion and expansion of women's legal and political rights is perhaps the most difficult challenge we face. Slowly but surely we are witnessing the emergence of legal reforms that will raise the status of women in the home and in society.

Domestic and sexual violence against women remains one of the most serious and under-reported human rights violations in the Americas. In Argentina, women have worked to incorporate domestic abuse issues in police training. Many countries now have human rights ombudsmen with special offices dedicated to protecting the rights of women. In Panama, legislators have reformed the Family Code to better regulate such matters as alimony, child support and child custody.

And in my own country, we have introduced comprehensive Violence Against women plans that provide counseling for victims, training for officers, and prosecution of offenders in all 50 states. Throughout Latin America, countries are finding ways to open up political participation for women at all levels -- from the grassroots to the voting booth. We need to share more of these ideas and actions with each other so that all women throughout the Americas can experience the same improvements in their lives.

That, in fact, was the aim of the First Ladies Conference I attended in Panama City last week.

At the conference, I also witnessed the signing of another agreement -- this one between USAID and the Inter-American Institute for Human Rights in San Jose, Costa Rica.

The Institute was founded to defend and foster respect for human rights at a time when repressive regimes controlled the lives of many of the peoples of the Americas.

It offered crucial support to the brave individuals throughout the region who spoke out against torture and repression at a time when such acts often meant risking one's job, one's home -- even one's life.

In 1990, the Institute embarked on a new mission in human rights advocacy: It established a formal program on gender and human rights. When I visited the Institute with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in May, I had the opportunity to meet and speak with women who are in the forefront of women's rights issues throughout the Americas. As they said, there is little difference between violence in politics and violence at home. Both dishonor democracy. As the Secretary of State said, domestic violence can never be excused as cultural. It is criminal.

Across the hemisphere, efforts such as these are transforming lives.

None of this progress would have happened if women themselves had not spoken out, demanded change, and forced their governments to respond to their needs.

We must encourage more women to make their voices heard, to join together in both community and national organizations, to press for political change beneficial to all women, to encourage them to vote in local and national elections, and to send more women to office.

Only women can make democracy work for ourselves and our families. It is a message that is coming alive in countries all around the world. Last summer, at a conference in Vienna, I met with a group of women from the newly democratic countries of Eastern and Central Europe. They had just begun to recognize the power of independent citizen action to address challenges as diverse as the trafficking of women in prostitution and the need for better health care. And they had gathered to share ideas, to renew and strengthen their faith in democratic values and freedoms. This kind of convening might be beneficial for our hemisphere as well. As our countries to continue to expand our political, economic and strategic alliances, the women of this hemisphere can lead the way in building an alliance of democratic values that will strengthen our democracies into the next millennium.

In many ways, the women of Argentina and the United States have a wider spectrum of opportunities than the women and girls who live in the countries that lie between our own.

We are no longer consigned solely to lives like those described by President Sarmiento, where we, "look after the house, get the meals ready, shear the sheep, milk the cows, make the cheese, and weave the coarse cloth used for garments...The boys exercise their strength and amuse themselves...With early manhood comes complete idleness and ease." [From: Life of the Argentine Republic.]

Now I'm not sure any of us would use the words "idleness and ease" to describe our early adulthood. But we have come a long way.

That does not mean, however, that we do not face formidable challenges in our own lives and in the life of our society. Not only do we have a responsibility to work on behalf of women in our hemisphere and around the world who still struggle for the rights we have won, we must confront the new questions that have edged up to our frontdoors.

While the superficial homogenization of the world means that people on every continent wear the same jeans, eat the same fast food, and listen to the same music, these surface similarities do not override a longing for a deeper identity and meaning in our lives. Despite improving material conditions around the world, families are under new stresses. The gap between rich and poor in many countries grows wider. The social safety net -- health care, education, pensions, decent wages, good jobs -- is in danger of fraying for those less able to navigate this new world. And even for those of us blessed with good health, educations, and affluence, we also face pressing questions:

Questions about how we strike the right balance among our personal roles as wife, mother, homemaker, employed worker, citizen; about how we claim a personal identity in an age of anonymous globalization and high technology; about how families will raise children in the face of pressures from the consumer culture and mass media that undermine parental authority and glorify instant gratification.

This last question is of particular importance to those of us who are mothers concerned about the future of our daughters.

For we have not won our places in society, we have not fought for women's rights as human rights to stand by while the consumer culture does its best -- in my country and yours -- to objectify women and make girls believe that only their appearances -- not their hearts, minds or souls -- are important.

The fundamental task of a democracy is to pass its essential beliefs on to the next generation. Central among these is the conviction that women's full humanity is an unshakable God-given truth -- and that democracy itself can never be fulfilled unless countries come to know and uphold that truth as intimately as they know their own histories.

Last year, I participated in a call-in show for Voice of America. One male caller asked me very earnestly what I meant when I said, "Women's rights are human rights and human rights are women's rights" at the Beijing Conference on Women.

I told the caller to close his eyes and think of all the rights and privileges he enjoyed as a man. Then I asked him to imagine a world where every woman enjoyed those very same rights.

The acoustics in this hall are famous around the world. So what is said here may be heard from one end of the Americas to the other. Let us raise our voices on behalf of women to proclaim that we will not rest until we have repealed discriminatory laws, expelled the mythology about a woman's proper role, and stared down the forces of physical and psychological intimidation that stifle the potential of women and children.

I know that if we all continue to work together, adding voices to our chorus, we will make that world a reality.