

March 6, 1996

I am delighted to join all those celebrating International Women's Day, 1996.

Each year at this time, we pause to reflect on the countless contributions women have made to the social, cultural, political, and economic life of nations throughout the world. For American women -- who still struggle to obtain equal rights, opportunity, and pay -- it is also an occasion to join hands and voices with their sisters around the world who seek to end all forms of injustice against women.

At the recent United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, thousands of women from countries across the globe met to discuss issues affecting women and to develop a Platform for Action. The resulting document represents a powerful consensus about the need to advance women's status by improving access to education, health care, jobs, and credit. It describes the fundamental desire of all women to enjoy basic legal and human rights and to take part, as equal partners with men, in the political, economic, and social life of their nations.

As we face the diverse challenges of the next century, it is more important than ever that we address the problems of violence, economic inequality, and inadequate representation in government faced by women worldwide. In doing so, we call for a day when women's extraordinary daily contributions are celebrated -- a time when we fully recognize that it takes all people, striving together, to build a just and compassionate world.

Hillary and I send our best wishes to all for a memorable observance.

draft/sc
March 6, 1996

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
DISCUSSION WITH LUTHER JACKSON MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS
INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
MARCH 8, 1996

TALKING POINTS

[Acknowledgements: Marilyn Monahan, Secretary-Treasurer of NEA; those who helped with the video; students, teachers, staff]

- ~~Good Morning.~~ I'm delighted to be here to celebrate *at Luther Jackson M.S.* "International Women's Day." This day gives us a chance to think a little bit about the countless contributions women have made to our country -- and to countries around the world.
- It's called "International Women's Day," but it is not just about women; it's about all of us. The theme for this day is not just that women are important, but that we are all important to each other *and we need to value & respect each other.*
- ~~Because if~~ *Because if* women and girls are given the opportunities they need to succeed, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations flourish as well. *It didn't seem for any child, parent or family when...*
- Everybody -- men and women, girls and boys -- has a stake in the issues that affect women and girls. The U.N. World Conference on Women in Beijing focused world attention on access to education, health care, jobs, and human rights. *In fact - it was the 1st intl gathering ever --*

[Introduce Beijing Commemorative video]

[After video, open discussion with students]

Possible Questions for Students

- 1) As you saw in the video, there were ~~many~~ young people *from all over the world* at the U.N. Conference. If you had been one of them, what issues do you think you would have raised? *if the conference were next wk...*
- 2) What are some things you can do every day -- in your family, your school, your community, that can help give people the opportunities they need to improve their lives?
- 3) We as a country have come far in our efforts to increase opportunities for women and girls. What else do you think needs to be done?
- 4) People from countries all over the world came to the Conference. How do you think your life is the same or different

from people from countries in Africa, Asia, and South America?

5) What do you think our country would be like if girls were not allowed to go to school? How do you think it affects other countries?

6) How are conferences like this helpful,
Why is it imp. to have conferences?

MEDIA ADVISORYMEDIA ADVISORY**MEDIA ADVISORY**

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton Will Celebrate International Women's Day with Fairfax County Eighth Graders

What: The First Lady will lead a discussion on issues affecting women, girls and their families with a small group of boys and girls at Luther Jackson Middle School. America's class of 2000 will be in the auditorium -- over 400 eighth graders.

The First Lady will also preview a short video, made for middle and high school students, that highlights last September's Fourth World Conference on Women. Mrs. Clinton led the U.S. delegation to Beijing.

When: Friday, March 8, 10 a.m.

Where: Luther Jackson Middle School
3020 Gallows Road, Falls Church, Va.

Why: International Women's Day is an occasion to focus on the conditions of women and girls around the world. A sampling of some issues: The 50% of the world's population who are women do 66% of the world's work, earn 10% of the world's income and occupy 11% of the world's seats in government. In the United States, women earn 74 cents for every dollar a man earns, hold 46% of the jobs but only 5% of top corporate positions and only 20% of state legislative seats. Women and girls in America suffer violence and abuse no less than those around the world.

Who: Event organizers and sponsors of the video "Cornerstone for the Future:"

- * The National Education Association (NEA), which represents 2.2 million education employees
- * The Center for Policy Alternatives, a Washington, DC-based, non partisan think tank
- * The Sara Lee Foundation, a philanthropic division of the Sara Lee Corporation

The National Education Association Secretary-Treasurer Marilyn Monahan, who will introduce The First Lady, and The Center for Policy Alternatives President Linda Tarr-Whelan, who has just been sworn in as the head of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women -- both were members of the U.S. delegation to the Fourth World Conference. Fairfax County School Board Chairman Kristen Amundson will welcome The First Lady.

Directions

The school is 15 - 20 minutes from downtown DC. From Route 50, take the Gallows Road exit, turn north on Gallows Road. Luther Jackson is on the left. From 495, take the Route 50 West exit to the Gallows Road exit, turn right on Gallows Road.

Video

Cornerstone for the Future: Girls and Young Women

Summary for Viewers

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women
Beijing, China September 4-15, 1995
The Non-Government Organization Forum
Huairou, China August 30- September , 1995

Women and men from villages and towns in Africa, high rise buildings in Tokyo, and communities across the United States gathered in Beijing China to participate in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. They shared one goal: to improve the health, education and well-being of girls, women and families worldwide.

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Honorary Chair, US Delegation to the Conference

As honorary chair of the US delegation, I saw firsthand the commitment and energy delegates from around the world brought to the task of finding ways to improve women's lives. Some fifty thousand people attended the Conference and Forum to focus world attention on issues that matter most in the lives of girls, women and their families:

- access to education, health care, jobs and credit
- the chance to enjoy basic legal and human rights
- to live lives free from violence and
- to participate fully in the political lives of their country.

These are things many of us in the US take for granted. When my daughter Chelsea turned five, she went to school, no ifs, and or buts about it. But for many girls around the world, school or even learning to read is just a dream. Imagine not knowing how to read signs on the road or how to sign your name simply because you are a girl. For millions of women and girls around the world, that is reality.

When girls are taught to read, they are better able to contribute to their society. When they are given the respect and guidance they deserve, girls can help their families, communities, and countries achieve their full potential.

By addressing issues of importance to women, delegates at the Beijing conference also addressed issues of crucial importance to every family and every nation in the world.

Status of Women Around the World

Women are more than one-half of the world's population. In developing countries, especially in Africa, women grow one-half their nation's food. They raise most of the world's children and nurse the elderly. In short, they are the unrecognized backbone of the world economy. Yet, 70 percent of the world's poor are women. Two-thirds of those who are not taught to read are women. Sometimes, mothers are forced to watch their children die of malnutrition caused by poverty. In some countries, women and girls do not have a say in the political lives of their countries, are not allowed to own property, or borrow money from a bank, or inherit property equally with their brothers and husbands. In many countries, including the US, women are paid less for the work they do. Many jobs are still not available to women.

As long as these conditions exist -- as long as women are prevented from realizing their God-given potential -- neither women nor their families will flourish.

The Role of the United Nations

Today, through the United Nations, people from all over the world are working hard to make sure girls and women are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve. In 1945, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt addressed the UN on behalf of women and girls.

The United Nations was founded by 51 nations at the end of World War II. It has helped countries end and even avoid war. Through organizations at the UN such as UNICEF, the UN Children's Fund, and the World Health Organization, the UN helps developing nations stay strong and independent.

The United Nations is working to recognize women as full partners in its projects. Over the years, the UN has played an active role in promoting women's rights. Following is a chronology of UN conference on women.

- Mexico City, Mexico in 1975. Delegates celebrated International Women's Year and called for an end to all forms of discrimination against women.
- Copenhagen, Denmark in 1980. Delegates evaluated progress.
- Nairobi, Kenya in 1985. Delegates developed forward looking strategies.

The Role of the United Nations (contd.)

At the UN Fourth World Conference in Beijing in September 1995, for the first time, women's issues were recognized as important to everyone. World leaders including Prime Ministers from Norway and Pakistan and the President of Peru joined Gertrude Mongella, from Tanzania, the Secretary General of the Conference in taking the work of previous women's conferences ever further.

The Platform for Action

At the end of two week of debate, delegations from 189 nations approved the Platform for Action. The Platform is a document which outlines strategies for implementing social and policy changes to improve the conditions of girls and women. The Platform calls for:

- girls
- freedom
- increased access to health
- insure

The Platform condemns violence against women everywhere -- in the home, on the streets, and in war -- and calls on governments to play a role in preventing and punishing violence. The Platform also encourages the establishment of innovative banks that give small loans to women to start businesses in poor communities.

The Platform for Action is not a legally binding document, but the countries who have approved accepted the moral obligation to implement its recommendations. It is a document that many women can use to pressure their governments into changing laws and practices that discriminate against women.

The Platform recognizes that any discrimination against women is a violation of human rights. First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton in her speech to the Conference said:

"If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, it is that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights."

The Non-Government Organization Forum

At a parallel conference at Huairou, an hour outside Beijing, more than 35,000 community activists from private organizations around the world met to exchange ideas and develop specific recommendations for government action. They organized workshops, seminars, and lectures on a variety of issues and developed steps that governments can take.

The streets of Huairou were filled with colors of the world: Indian women in their bright silk saris, Muslim women with dark veils, and delegations of African women wearing fabrics they made especially for the Conference.

The Role of Young People

The conference and the Platform for Action were not just the work of adults. One third of the delegations sent youth representatives to Beijing. Young people were represented in unprecedented numbers -- more than at any other UN conference in history. The voices of young people were heard loud and clear at this conference. Their energy in advocating for better access for education for girls, decent health care and the preservation of the environment impressed and inspired the older delegates.

Bringing Beijing Home The First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton

The Fourth World Conference on Women was an important milestone for women. Here in the United States, we have made a strong commitment to achieving the goals of the Conference. The President has established an Interagency Council at the White House to follow through on the promised made in Beijing. We are dedicated to:

- ending violence against women
- expanding our political participation
- assuring equal access to educations and health care
- strengthening families and
- building strong communities.

Bringing Beijing Home (contd.)

What we saw in Beijing was not just another conference and not just a lot of talk. The Beijing Conference was the beginning of better, brighter future for girls and women. If we follow up as individuals, as schools, as businesses and as governments then we will see those goals come to life. That progress will make the world safer, more prosperous and more democratic for all people.

I hope you have a sense of the excitement and hope that many of us felt in Beijing. The possibilities for girls and women are truly limitless. You can do your part to make sure these become a reality. No matter what your age or position in life, you can learn more about the world around you, share your learning with others and work with each other to make the world a better place.

Together we can create a world in which every woman is treated with respect and dignity, every boy and girls is loved and cared for, and every family has the hope of a strong and stable future.

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For further information about the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and follow-up contact:

CPA

address

President's Interagency Council on Women

address

Credits