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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
WORKING WOMEN COUNT EVENT
THE WHITE HOUSE
APRIL 10, 1995

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you all. I want to welcome you to the White House. This is a particularly important occasion for this Administration. I am sorry that the weather did not cooperate with us staying in the Rose Garden, but the working women of the White House made a decision and moved us indoors. I am grateful for that.

This is the room where we've had two previous events about "Women Count," and I was privileged to participate in both of those. First, the announcement of the survey and introducing some of the people who were going to be involved. The second with the Vice President, receiving the survey results and today, is an especially important moment because now we're going to be looking to the future and what kind of recommendations are coming from this survey.

The survey tells us in no uncertain terms that women are working more than ever -- in the home, outside the home -- balancing two jobs, juggling all of the demands that so many of us know so well. And, that we, as individuals, as family members, as citizens, and certainly those in decision-making positions, have to recognize the challenges and stresses that women are encountering in the workplace and in the balance between work and family. It's not only important for women, it's important for men, children and the larger society.

In a few minutes the President will talk about some of the initiatives that have been put into place over the last two years on behalf of all women, but particularly on behalf of working women. But first let me just mention a few ways in which women count within this Administration.

We know women count because women have had unprecedented access to decision-making positions that are important to the larger society. Appointments of qualified women in the Cabinet and sub-Cabinet and throughout the government really speak for itself as the kind of commitment that this Administration has carried forward on behalf of women.

There has also been a historic commitment to women's health, something that had not been given the attention that it needed in the past. And through the efforts we have taken to coordinate approaches to women's health, we're seeing some breakthroughs in research that is being done in areas such as breast cancer. And we are working on a very large women's health initiative that will make a difference in our lives and in particularly the lives of our daughters.

The President recently announced the creation of an office within the Department of Justice to address the problem of domestic violence. A problem that too often is not given the attention, that it needs and even when it receives attention does not lead to remedies.

Under this President also, women who own small businesses have enjoyed greater access to federally guaranteed loans and technical assistance to start and expand their businesses.

It's very important that, when this President became president, he felt absolutely committed to carrying through on putting people first. And putting people first means just that -- and it certainly means putting working women first, and paying attention to their concerns and listening to what we have to say about the challenges we face.

One last thing that I would like to mention is that the "Working Women Count" project, along with all the rest of the Administration, is really just the tip of the iceberg about what our commitment really needs to be on behalf of women and families in our society.

Some of you may know I recently returned from an extraordinary trip to South Asia, where I was privileged to meet women of all different kinds of backgrounds who were working on behalf of themselves and their families. And I recognized, whether I was talking to women academics, business leaders, and civic leaders at the American embassies I visited, or whether I was in villages talking to women there about their dreams and aspirations.

But there is a common thread that runs through the conversations I have, whether I am in Washington or Topeka or Sacramento or Bangladesh or India or Pakistan or Nepal or Sri Lanka. What women are saying in the "Working Women Count" surveys, of the more than two hundred and fifty thousand who responded, is that we are all attempting to make the best possible choices for our own lives, and the lives of those people we hold dear.

We also want to make a contribution to our larger community. It's a wonderful opportunity for us to recognize the contributions that women make every single day, and to stop for a minute, as we hear these recommendations, and recognize that we can do more to enable women to make the best possible choices for themselves and their families.

I hope we will get to a point where we no longer have to do surveys, or we no longer have to talk about women's issues as a separate kind of emphasis. That instead we just look at the huge array of possibilities that human life presents to us and women, and their role will be accepted as being part of that great effort that all of us are engaged in to define ourselves, to make identities for ourselves, to contribute to the next generation.

It's very exciting for us to have a Secretary of Labor that

cares so deeply about working people, and is so intent upon putting people first. And anyone who follows the work that Bob Reich does day in and day out knows that he cares deeply about what happens in the homes and workplaces of America. And that he is absolutely committed to doing what he can to make sure working people, and particularly working women, get the respect they deserve to have for the contributions they make.

And so it is my pleasure to introduce Secretary of Labor, Bob Reich.

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White House

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton's
Remarks to the Women's Leadership Forum
Boston, Massachusetts
June 20, 1996

Hello. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you I am just thrilled to be back in Boston and to have the chance to see so many of you who are both long time friends of both mine and my husband's and people whom I am delighted to be able to be getting to know. I want to thank Vicki for that introduction, and more than that I want to thank her for her friendship and for her support and the fun I always have with her.

I don't know how many of you have been lucky enough to spend time with Vicki, but you always laugh. I mean it is one of the great joys of my time in Washington.

I am so pleased to be here with another friend of mine, Theresa Hines. Theresa is a woman of great integrity and commitment and Massachusetts is not only very lucky to have John Kerry as your Senator, now and into the future, but to have the talents of Theresa Hines as well.

I also am pleased to share this platform with Elaine Shuester, who works so hard on this event, Joan Menard, who is doing a marvelous job here in the state democratic party. Don Fowler, who has traveled and worked tirelessly on behalf of the National Democratic Party. Angela Mineno, who I am always pleased to be with. She and her husband have just given great leadership to this wonderful city. Shannon O'Brien, and Carol Pensky, who is the national chair of the Women's Leadership Forum. And to all of you who had anything to do with pulling this event together and creating this extraordinary turnout.

I want to thank you for your contributions but more than that for the leadership and for the example you are setting, as to what women can do in politics and the opportunities available to all of us. The Women's Leadership Forum and network '96 have made it possible for thousands and thousands of women around the country to be involved. I have attended events like this in Miami and in Washington, in Philadelphia, and in New York. On Monday I'll be in Seattle and then in a few weeks later in Los Angeles,

and San Francisco, it is spreading like wild fire from one side of the country to the next.

Women want to be involvement in the political decision-making of our country. And the reason, I believe you are here, is the reason I am here -- we have a clear vision about what we want our country to be, and we know we have to fight for that vision; we cannot leave it to others. We must be among those who stand up and say, "Here is what we want for America in the 21st century."

Women have always played a critical role in the life of our country. We may not have always been in elected office, as many of you in this room are, we certainly may not have been among those who helped to fund political campaigns in the past, but we've been there on the front lines year in and year out. As volunteers and participants, working on behalf of causes and candidates, in whom we believed. And at every critical point in American history, women have been catalysts for change.

I think often about the last hundred years, as we are about the end this century, and at so many points women were there to help set the direction this nation would take. Think about the similarities that exists between our time and the so called progressive era of a hundred years ago. We were in the midst of a great change in our country, we were moving from an Agriculture society to an industrial one. People were leaving farms and rural areas to move to cities. Immigrants were flooding in to places like Boston, there was so much change, and much of it seemed to create problems for people as they attempted to make sense of what was happening in their lives.

We also saw the women, coming to the forefront to say that we had to provide for each other, that it wasn't enough just to succeed on one's own but we had to lend a helping hand. Women like Jane Adams in the settlement houses of Chicago, or Eleanor Roosevelt in the tenements of New York City. And so many others like them, who appreciated that when change was occurring at a rapid rate, we needed to do more than just stand by and watch it happen, we had to meet the challenges of our time, and we had to protect the values that we cherished. We had to provide both for opportunity and responsibility as we worked to create stronger communities and families.

Jane Adams once compared government and politics, to what she called "enlarged housekeeping". She thought women could help make government run more effectively if they were involved in the political process. She, like many other women of the time, understood that new times demanded new responses from all of us.

The first demonstration ever held at the White House was when the suffragettes chained themselves to the White House fence. Even the President didn't like that very much. He looked outside the window and could not understand what all the fuss was

about. But we know, because we owe those women and others like them the right to vote, and their willingness to take risks on behalf of opportunities for the rest of us.

At this time, we are faced with new challenges, and once again men and women are called to meet them. We have a rich legacy of commitment and action. Seventy-five years after the vote however, many women do not feel they have a stake in our political process. Fifty-four million women chose not to vote in the 1994 elections. Part of what the Women's Leadership Forum and network '96 is about is bringing to all women, wherever they live or work, the message that it does matter. The political process affects our lives in ways we may not even be aware of.

And it is critical that the people who are elected to office understand what is at stake, as we draw to the end of this century. Often times in election years people will stand before audiences, like this, and say "This is one of the most important elections we face". I am going to do that because I believe that with all my heart. This election is about two very distinct visions of the future. It is about who we are and who we want to become as a people and as a nation. It is about what legacy we will leave our children and grandchildren. And it is about whether we will choose to live in a society divided by income, and race, and religion, or one that works to live up to our time honored principles of inclusion and compassion, and to build a better community for all Americans.

In the face of all the changes that are occurring all around us, I think we should just look at the challenges we face because they are not just challenges for elected officials, not just for the President, or for Senator Kennedy or Senator Kerry, or your state representatives, they are challenges for all of us. And this election will determine in large measure whether we face up to our challenges or walk away from them. And if we do face up to them, whether we do so with our values in mind as to the kind of nation we want to build.

The first challenge, which the President referred to in talking about what we face as a nation in the State of the Union, is to cherish our children and strengthen our families. There is nothing more important than how we care for each other and how we raise our children.

And you know talking about family values is not enough. We have to act in ways that value families. And by November, based not on talk and not on action, I believe Americans will know that it is the democratic party that is the true pro-family party in our country. Just look at the record, it took this President, a democratic President, to sign into law the Family and Medical Leave Act. Over 800,000 Massachusetts workers are protected by the Family and Medical Leave Act. And a recent bi-partisan congressional study found that it was not a burden on business, but that it gave workers the flexibility to be both good workers

and good parents. The Family and Medical Leave Act is what family values should be about.

It also took this President to try to take action to return authority to parents, so that they could have more say over what happens in their own homes. That's what the idea behind the v-chip is. That we know that things come into our living rooms, across our television sets, that we don't think are good for children. But often parents feel overwhelmed and bewildered about how to take back authority. Well, there are several things that need to be done -- The v-chip, which the President championed will give parents the technical authority to be able to program their T.V. sets.

The voluntary rating system which the industry agreed to in a meeting with the President, will enable you and me to understand how to program that set by making decisions about what we want our children to watch. And right now the Federal Communications Commission is considering a proposal strongly backed by the President, to require networks to offer three hours of quality programming for our children. It is the least that should be done to provide better television in our homes.

We also have a President who has been willing to stand up to the tobacco lobby and say "Quit advertising tobacco products to children."

Now we all know that parents bare the primary responsibility for children but as a mother I know that I do not do it all by myself or with my husband. There are many people out in society who will affect my daughter, whether I like it or not. And to have a President who understands how challenging it is today to raise children gives me a lot of comfort. Because he understands that government should be a partner in trying to make society more family friendly. The other...(Tape breaks off)

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS
OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION
AUGUST 26, 1996**

Welcome to my hometown, a city of extraordinarily talented women.

Please bear with me as I pay homage to one local girl who prepared me to make the choices that were right for my life -- who always held me to high standards -- who supported me unfailingly. She is Dorothy Rodham. How proud I am that she has come home with me this week to see my husband, her son-in-law, renominated as President of the United States.

Today, as the country turns its attention to the Presidential campaign, Chicago will dedicate a park to another native daughter -- a true American heroine -- Jane Addams. She was a renowned social theorist, a skilled political operative who still inspires us to believe in the power women have when they are galvanized into a movement for change.

Jane Addams's Hull House was, if you'll pardon the expression, a true village. It remains an enduring model of a dynamic public-private partnership that addressed social need by providing poor families with the kind of assistance that fosters self-reliance, competence, and above all, good citizenship.

Come to think of it, Jane Addams was just about perfect in all respects except one. She was a Republican. But even Democratic women in her day forgave her for that. Eleanor Roosevelt was inspired by her and by what she stood for. I know because Eleanor Roosevelt and I have had several conversations about it.

Just about everywhere I go, it seems Mrs. Roosevelt has been there before me. And once again, here I am in Chicago, at the Democratic Convention, and I find Mrs. Roosevelt was here 56 years ago. She had come to nominate her husband for a third term as President way back in 1940. And if you think the Republicans this year are beating up unfairly on Bill Clinton, you should hear what they had to say about Franklin Roosevelt!

Some things never do change, I guess.

What a great day this is as we gather for the Democratic Convention and officially begin the campaign that will reelect President Clinton and Vice President Gore to an historic second term.

What an astonishing accident of history that this day should coincide with Women's Equality Day and the 76th Anniversary of the victory for women's suffrage.

What a force women have become in American politics!

As so many of you know, it took 76 long years for American women to win the right to vote. But we have come a long way in the 76 years since.

We are finally fulfilling the essential promise of those intrepid suffragists who fought so hard and so long to secure women their due rights as citizens. We are finally realizing their vision of a public life enriched and expanded by the full range of women's talents, interests and values.

American women went in droves to the polls in 1992. We voted overwhelmingly for Bill Clinton and Al Gore. And for the first time, with the help of our now fabled EMILY's List, we raised more money than any other single political action group. And we elected more women to office in their own right than ever before.

Sure, some women grew skeptical and stayed home from the polls in 1994, and you all know what happened as a result. But American women overall remain a powerful progressive force in American politics.

So guess what? In case you haven't noticed, even the Republicans have suddenly begun to pay attention.

Issues of long concern to women -- economic security, crime, health, education, child care, and choice -- have emerged as the central questions driving American political life.

The Republican Party is trying to get the women's vote. But we women can't be fooled, can we? Of course not, and the reason is simple.

Bill Clinton in his first term has accomplished more for American women -- more for American people -- than any other modern American president.

-- Ten million more jobs in America than we had in 1992, and that's good news for women who now make up nearly half our workforce.

-- The lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in America in 27 years, and that's good news for women who have to worry about making ends meet.

-- The federal deficit cut nearly in half, and that's good news for women who are anxious about their children's futures.

President Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, and that's good news for 12 million American men and women who've had to take time off to care for an ailing child, spouse or parent.

President Clinton raised the minimum wage and expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, so that it pays again to work again in America. And that's especially good news for those two-thirds of minimum wage workers who are women.

He signed the Kassebaum-Kennedy health insurance reform bill into law. This legislation is a long-overdue victory for millions of Americans who lived in fear of losing their health insurance when they changed or lost their jobs, or who couldn't even get insurance because a family member had a chronic illness or a pre-existing condition.

President Clinton has granted more federal loans to small businesses than ever before, and that's good news for women business owners who are creating more new jobs than the entire Fortune 500.

President Clinton significantly expanded student loans, job training, and apprentice programs, and that's good news for women who are still struggling toward full equality in the workplace.

President Clinton passed a crime bill that is placing thousands more police on the streets of their communities, while also restricting gun purchases and banning assault weapons. And that's good news for American women who worry about their family's safety.

President Clinton is committed to ensuring universal access to reproductive health and family planning services and to protecting a woman's right to choose, and that's good news for all women.

And don't forget that this President has appointed more women to office than any President before him, from Janet Reno to Ruth Bader Ginsberg; from the armed forces to the White House to the federal bench and beyond.

His has been an unparalleled and distinctive record of commitment to women as full partners in decision-making.

Nowhere was this more evident than last year in Beijing, when U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright and Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala joined me in leading a diverse and forceful delegation of American men and women to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. There the Clinton Administration let the peoples of the world know that women everywhere must enjoy human rights and dignity. And we are working hard to make sure that the goals of the Beijing Conference are fulfilled and that here and abroad it is understood that:

"Women's rights are human rights -- and human rights are women's rights."

President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore will stand for nothing less.

Now I'm the first to admit that I'm not very objective about my husband and his Administration.

Maybe it's because I see Bill Clinton every day as a man, not just as a President.

Maybe it's because I see him every day as the son of a woman who raised him alone, against great odds, but always with a deep, abiding love that to this day secures his essential sense of confidence, optimism, and well-being.

Maybe it's because I see him every day as the supportive husband of a wife who still tries everyday, as so many of you do, to combine family and work obligations.

Maybe it's because I see him every day as the adoring father of our wonderful teenage daughter.

Maybe, it's because I see him as a man, not just as a President.

Which is why I am confident that Americans everywhere -- ever sensible, ever practical, ever wise Americans -- will keep him as their President for four more years.

So let's all get going and get to work on this campaign.

We've got a big job ahead.

Thank you for all you are doing. Good luck and godspeed.

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
JANE ADDAMS/WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT LUNCHEON
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
AUGUST 26, 1996

It is a great pleasure to be here to help honor women who are serving our country in the spirit of Jane Addams.

I can think of no better day -- and no better place -- for this celebration. Seventy-six years ago, on August 26, 1920, American women won the right to vote. Today, we recognize the great debt we owe to the courageous women who came before us, those who awakened the national conscience to the injustices of society, and who made their communities, their country, and their world a better place for their children and their children's children.

Those of you who have answered the call of public service are part of a proud tradition of activism that found its wings in this very city. Jane Addams and Hull House are permanently linked to most of the social progress achieved in this country over the last century.

But Jane Addams' legacy doesn't just lie in the laws and reforms she helped bring about, it also lies in her life story. Her life of courage, of struggle, and most of all action, continues to inspire those who have ever doubted their own abilities to make a difference.

I bet there isn't a woman -- or even a man -- in this room who hasn't drawn strength and motivation from the life of Jane Addams. In 1935, just weeks before Addams' death, Eleanor Roosevelt said, "So many good things are not done because people become disheartened by criticism, or discouraged by being told that they can not succeed. It takes the example of great courage such as Miss Addams has shown to spur on those of us who have less courage when we are left to ourselves."

Jane Addams saw the overwhelming challenges and problems of her time -- the soul-crushing poverty, the discrimination against newly-arrived immigrants, the undernourished children working in unsafe factories, the children playing in rotting trash heaps because they had no place else to go -- and did something about them. She called everyone -- women and men, idealistic reformers and seasoned politicians, to action.

Through Hull House, she brought education, good nutrition, music, and the arts into the lives of thousands of boys and girls and men and women living in one of Chicago's poorest neighborhoods. She empowered people to make the most of their own lives and to take the responsibilities of citizenship seriously.

But Addams knew that Hull House could never be an island of social progress, immune to the ills of the larger community. If the children nurtured in the kindergartens of Hull House were to remain strong and healthy, they needed to walk home through streets that were safe and alleys that were clean; they needed to be able to eat food that would not make them sick; they needed to find work that offered fair hours and fair wages.

Addams knew that lasting change could occur only with the help of government. So she got involved in ways large and small. She became a city garbage inspector and turned her ward into one of the cleanest in the city. And she became a sophisticated political operative, leading movements to end child labor and establish a juvenile justice system.

All of you who have found your callings in government and politics, are in one sense, the daughters of Jane Addams. You are keepers of her legacy. We all thank you for being examples of great courage in a fast-paced, constantly changing, turn-of-the-millennium, Information Age. We thank you for keeping alive the tradition of activism begun by the suffragists, for standing by your conscience and values, and for making a difference in your communities.

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FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS FOR "THE U.N. WOMEN'S CONFERENCE ONE YEAR LATER"
WASHINGTON, DC
SEPTEMBER 28, 1996

Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you all for gathering here and thank you who are gathered all over our country at the more than 400 sites. Thank you Judy for moderating this program. And I particularly want to thank the distinguished members of our panel as well as our audience here in Washington. And all of you for sharing your time and insights and for taking part in today's discussion. When I think about the thousands of women and men across America who are gathered today, I know that your actions speak louder than any of our words could.

One year ago, I had the privilege of joining the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It was an historic gathering -- a celebration of the contributions women make in every aspect of life.

It was also a call to action. A call to action on behalf of women and girls around the world who are being denied the opportunity to live up to their own God-given potential -- being denied education, health care, jobs and credit, the chance to enjoy basic legal and human rights and to participate fully in the political lives of their countries.

I remember, as I spoke in Beijing, looking out at the delegates and seeing women of all colors and races, dressed in everything from Western-style business suits to saris to boubas. Women from 189 countries, so different on the surface, yet united in a single urgent message: "Women's rights are human rights -- and human rights are women's rights."

It was a simple and straightforward message. But as I recently discovered, it sometimes requires further explanation. When I did radio call in show on the Voice of America, a caller from Iran asked very earnestly what I had meant when I said in Beijing that "women's rights are human rights -- and human rights are women's rights." The only thing I could say to explain it to him was: "Just close your eyes and imagine all the rights that men have always had. Now imagine women having all those same rights."

Today, we see that the message of Beijing is being heard around the world. In classrooms. In factories. In offices. In seats of power.

The platform for action that 189 nations agreed to at that women's conference did not just generate excitement and momentum, it generated results.

Women in Namibia now are afforded equal rights with men in marriage. Women in Fiji now can work past six in the evening. Women in Nepal may soon be allowed to own property. Women in Guatemala now can take advantage of scholarships to study political science at the national university. Women in India and Cameroon may now be better represented in government because of efforts to increase the number of women elected to office in those countries.

As we consider these achievements, I realize there is a tendency to assume that the Beijing conference had little relevance for American women because we enjoy advantages in wealth, health, education, and political and legal rights compared to women elsewhere in the world.

Yet if, like me, you have had the chance to travel around our country talking to people about their lives, you know that American women share many of the same aspirations and concerns as women in other countries.

And you also know, there is more we can do here at home on behalf of women and girls.

There is more we can do to protect women from violence at home and on the streets.

There is more we can do to ensure that women receive equal wages for equal work.

There is more we can do to provide retirement security for women who spend their waking hours on assembly lines, behind cash registers, and working at computers.

There is more we can do to help women fulfill the responsibilities of family and work.

There is more we can do to promote the health of women throughout their lifetimes.

And there is more we can do to make credit and other economic opportunities for self-sufficiency available to women.

And we are doing more, thanks in part to the conference in Beijing and the blueprint for action it gave us. Whether we are working on domestic violence, or reproductive rights, or job security, or pay equity, or workplace discrimination or on any other issue affecting women and girls, our actions are founded on the knowledge that women's rights and human rights really are one and the same thing.

Here in America, we are committed to build on the progress that is being made on behalf of women and girls. As soon as the Beijing conference ended, the President established the President's InterAgency Council on Women, which brings together representatives from each federal agency to develop policies that support the

advancement of women and girls here in the United States.

Let me give you a few examples of what our government and our non-governmental groups, working together, have accomplished in a short time.

The United States has an office at the Justice Department devoted to ending violence against women through tougher laws, better enforcement, and prevention. A nationwide 24-hour domestic violence hotline that went into effect earlier this year provides immediate crisis intervention for those in need. In just six months, that hotline has received more than 44,000 calls.

The Department of the Treasury has established a Presidential Awards Program to honor individuals and institutions who are making significant efforts to promote microenterprise in communities across our country. For those of you who have not heard of microenterprise, it's a fancy word for a modest program of providing loans to women who might not otherwise have access to credit. The women use these loans to start small businesses and help support themselves and their families.

In the field of health, Secretary Shalala and her department continue to make women's health a top priority, encouraging public-private partnerships to improve research in breast cancer and other women's diseases and establishing a National Women's Health Information Center.

The Department of Education has taken new steps to promote equity for girls and women and the Department of Housing and Urban Development has launched a Homeownership Initiative for Women.

And importantly, the Environmental Protection Agency will now assess the special impact of environmental health risks on women.

We see in these examples that the United States is not just paying lip service to the Beijing platform, but acting on it.

And I am particularly excited there are so many initiatives underway at the state and local level and among grass-roots organizations in communities across our country.

In Woodbridge, New Jersey volunteers are working with the Mayor's office to develop their own domestic violence help-line. In Maryland, women in the state legislature are using the Beijing platform to guide their legislative agenda. And mayors from Cleveland to Oakland are showing support for that agenda by working to expand opportunities for girls and women.

Grass-roots efforts are essential to our progress and today we could feel the excitement and accomplishments that are occurring: From Louisville, Kentucky, where students at a local high school put on their own day-long conference in which boys explored negative images of women in the media to San Antonio, Texas, where

young men and women college students held a march to protest domestic violence.

These activities are taking place in part because the agenda presented in Beijing resonated deeply with men and women across our country and around the world.

But I want to make one additional point.

Because we are talking about issues that matter in the lives of women and girls, it does not mean that we are ignoring issues of concern to men and boys.

If, as a nation and as a global family, we truly care about strong families, strong communities, and strong societies, we have to recognize that economic, political and social progress depends upon women and girls having access to the opportunities they deserve.

As I said in many different settings, including Beijing: When women flourish, families flourish. And when families flourish, communities flourish and nations flourish. And every one of us -- men and women, boys and girls -- stands to gain.

I am convinced that Beijing was a historic step toward achieving equal rights for women and girls here at home and around the world. And I am optimistic that we will make even more progress because so many Americans -- especially young women and young men -- are determined to mobilize their friends, neighbors and co-workers to make progress together.

Women have always been at the forefront of social, political and economic change in our country. We have all benefited from the courage and leadership of women like Susan B. Anthony, or Sojourner Truth, or Jane Addams, Ida B. Wells, Eleanor Roosevelt and so many others who led the struggles for women's suffrage, child labor laws, public education, civil rights and so much more. Now it is our turn to lead the way -- for our daughters and sons, for our granddaughters and grandsons.

Just this week, we got a glimpse of how far women have come when astronaut Shannon Lucid touched back down to Earth after a record-breaking stay of six months in space -- the longest tour in space of any woman or any American in history. I think that all of us gave a silent or maybe a quite loud cheer of congratulations.

Today, women can reach for the moon, literally and figuratively. That doesn't mean our work is done. But it does mean we can celebrate both how far we have come as we work together to continue progress and when we work for a day, I hope, when achievements like Sharon Lucid's and so many other women are the rule, not exception. The day when we don't need any more international women's conferences or InterAgency Councils or platforms on women's issues.

What we are striving for is the day when every person who graces this earth is able to pursue his or her dream to the fullest because the opportunities and encouragement are there and barriers have been torn down.

So, on behalf of all of us here in Washington, I want to thank everyone who has gathered and especially all of the you who have worked so hard for this past year to put into practice, the hopes and dreams and plans that hundreds and thousands of women worked so hard on, that came to fruition in Beijing.

I believe we have much to show for this one year and that with our continued commitment and dedication, we will continue to see accomplishments grow and barriers fall.

I hope that all of you take the kind of pride I do as I travel around our country in seeing women and men working together to build a better future for themselves and their communities.

Thank you all very much.

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transcript

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE WOMEN OF AUSTRALIA
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
NOVEMBER 21, 1996

Thank you very much. I am delighted to be here in this magnificent opera house, one of the architectural wonders of our world.

I want to thank Mrs. Howard for the warm hospitality that she and the Prime Minister have extended to my husband and me in Sydney and Canberra. I also want to thank Senator Newman for her words. Which I deeply agreed with, in terms of the agenda that confronts us and our mutual need learn from one another as we work on these problems. And I would be honored to take the message back that perhaps we could even strengthen our relationship. Thank you, too, Ambassador Dalrymple, for chairing the host committee. And I want to thank someone else -- Kaarn Weaver -- for the wonderful job you do every day in representing the United States in Australia.

Let me also thank our sponsors this afternoon: The Australian Center for American Studies at the University of Sydney, the New South Wales Branch of the Australian Institute of International Affairs, and the Research Institute for Asia and the Pacific, also at the University of Sydney.

Finally I want to thank the Australian people we have met and seen waving in crowds along every street we have traveled. You have made my husband and me feel so welcome and have only increased our desire to return with our daughter to this extraordinary country. The timing of our next visit, and whether we come in disguise, may depend more on the outcome of the golf match my husband is currently playing than on scheduling concerns. He may wish he had encountered a shark in the harbor - rather than on the fairway.

This is my first visit to Australia. I must confess that, while growing up, I was like many Americans who had a sense of Australia from seeing movies, images of the vast outback: Much like our Wild West, a place occupied by roguish types like Ned Kelly and filled with kangaroos. Just as, I assume, Australians who have not yet visited the United States might perhaps think that our country is one long-running episode of Melrose Place, not to mention that all our children like to dunk basketballs and wear baseball caps backwards.

I was thinking about our countries when my husband and I

arrived here the other evening from Honolulu. A few years back I had read Jill Ker Conway's memoir, The Road from Coorain, which included a memorable passage about her return home after a long sojourn in Europe. In it she describes flying into Sydney and seeing -- from above -- the beauty of the harbor, the golden beaches and the "grey-green city" lying at the edge of a continent.

At that moment she finally understands Australia's unique orientation in the world. The country, she writes, looks "across the vast expanse of the Pacific, not to Europe, but to Japan and Continental Asia."

Having read that passage, and being here for a few days now, before I travel to the Philippines and Thailand -- the Near North, not the Far East -- I feel better oriented in our world too.

Despite the thousands of miles of ocean that separate your country and mine, we are bound together in friendship and partnership based on common experiences and values.

We are united, not least, by our commitment to democracy and the values that democracy seeks to uphold. As proponents of freedom, we rejoice in recent developments around the globe: There is no Iron Curtain any more. In country after country, dictatorships have crumbled and democracy has come alive. The threat of nuclear war no longer hovers over us. As my husband said yesterday in Parliament, opportunities for peace and prosperity are greater than ever before. And the prospect of a new and even more dynamic century beckons us.

Yet at the same time, many people in our countries and around the world feel the strains caused by global competition and the rapid pace of change. The superficial cultural homogenization of the world means that people from Boston to Brisbane, Paris to Perth, and Moscow to Melbourne may wear the same jeans, eat the same fast food, and listen to the same music. But these surface similarities do not and cannot override a longing for identity and meaning in their own lives. Despite improving material conditions in advanced economies, families seem under stress. The gap between the rich and the poor grows wider. Even in the United States and Australia, the social safety net -- health care, education, pensions, good wages and good jobs -- is in danger of fraying for those less able to navigate this new world.

These pressures pose unavoidable questions for all of us as we approach the 21st century: Questions about how to balance individual and community rights and responsibilities; about how parents will raise children in the face of the influences of the

mass media and consumer culture; about personal identity and work in an age of globalization, information overload and high technology; about the roles of women in society; about how people will preserve their ethnic pride and value their national citizenship; about how nations will protect their sovereignty while cooperating regionally and globally with others.

Thinking about these challenges, and how free nations like ours will respond to them, we may need to be reminded that democracy is not just about our legally protected rights, elections or even free market economies. It's about the internalization of democratic values in people's hearts, minds and everyday lives. It's about how, in the absence of either hot or cold wars, democracy is rooted in the experiences of our young people. It's about developing among democratic nations what I call "an alliance of values" that withstands tyranny and terrorism. An alliance based on the shared values of freedom, opportunity, responsibility, community and respect for human rights.

Building and sustaining democracy has always required a balance of power that allows those values to flourish: A balance of public political power, private economic power and the power of civil society, those formal and informal networks that bring people together to make decisions for themselves and for the common good.

Democratic values are at risk when that balance shifts to the extremes: When government becomes too cumbersome or too intrusive or too restrictive. When the marketplace, which by definition knows the price of everything but the value of nothing, lures citizens into becoming merely consumers who care only about satisfying their personal wants. When civil society, which consists of local organizations, and philanthropies, and volunteer associations, and neighborhood groups and individual families, is weakened by larger political and economic forces.

Every generation faces the task of achieving the proper balance of power so that democratic values can survive and thrive.

Whether we succeed at this task is particularly important for women, whose voices are still too often silenced in too many parts of the world. It is equally important for women in countries such as ours who are still striving to attain and define their place in government, the economy and civil society and claim their share of personal, political, economic, and civic power.

During the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, I said that women's rights were human rights -- and

human rights are women's rights. One would think that at the end of this century that should be an unremarkable statement. I have been overwhelmed by the response that speech received. And also bewildered that the proposition should be open to question.

A few months ago I appeared on a radio program for the Voice of America. I fielded questions from all over the world. And many callers referred to my Beijing speech. And one male caller asked what my statement about women's rights really meant. I told him to imagine the rights men had and wanted and to apply them to women: the right to be valued as a member of a family, to be protected from violence and exploitation, to be assured equal access to the tools of opportunity -- health care, education, legal rights, political participation, economic empowerment -- tools that equip an individual with the capacity to make responsible decisions for one's life. Where women are given human rights they help create conditions in which they, their families and communities flourish.

Yet we know that even in advanced democracies such as ours, where these conditions are present for the vast majority of women, women's roles and rights are still being debated. They are being debated among women as well as between men and women, with implications for whether our democracies will meet the challenges of the future.

I know that some of you may recall we recently had an election in the United States. Many critical issues were raised during the campaign. But for the first time in America, a new set of concerns took on political importance -- concerns about enhancing the quality of our lives, about raising children, about meeting the demands of work and family.

Why were these issues suddenly at the heart of American politics? Because they are real issues on people's minds -- kitchen table issues -- and about how public and private power should be balanced to address them.

For example, will a new mother and her infant be allowed to stay in the hospital as long as a doctor deems it necessary -- or will private business considerations determine when they are ready to be sent home?

Will parents be allowed to take time off from work to care for a sick child or a loved one -- or will they be forced to choose between meeting their responsibilities to their jobs and meeting their responsibilities to their families?

The Family and Medical Leave law, the first piece of legislation my husband signed as President in 1993, took on greater political significance because my husband's opponent and

leaders of the other party in Congress disagreed about the law and the need to expand it. Family leave became a leading issue during the campaign, along with maternity stays for new mothers and how to protect health care coverage for older and poorer Americans, the majority of whom are women.

Even the book I wrote, It Takes a Village, became an issue in the campaign after it was attacked as an endorsement of government taking a dominant role in the raising of children. Anyone who reads the book knows that was not its theme. Rather, I argued that, although families bear the primary responsibility for child-rearing, each individual and institution in society has a responsibility toward children as well. The village of which I wrote is not a geographic location but a community of shared values and relationships.

People all over America started coming up to me at campaign appearances I made on behalf of my husband wearing buttons that said "It does take a village" or "I am a villager" or "Welcome to our village." They recognized that building a sense of community based on mutual responsibility not only helps all of us to work for our own ends - but also to help each other succeed as well. From what I know of your country, that is an unassailable tenet of your social contract even though you may disagree over the specifics.

Many observers in America, however, were perplexed that these issues were so important to voters this year. Accustomed to discussions of defense, diplomacy, economics and trade, some commentators never really caught on that so-called "women's issues" mattered because -- at root -- they were about the way that men and women live together and in society.

Such issues instead were often dismissed as marginal to the larger challenges our nation is facing or derided as "the feminization of politics."

What an unfortunate term. After all, don't fathers worry about how long their wives and babies can stay in the hospital when they need care? Don't men want to be able to take time off when a family member is gravely ill? Don't sons want to ensure that their elderly parents have health care coverage in the later stages of life?

Instead of the "feminization of politics," I prefer to think of this phenomenon as the "humanization of politics" in America. What we saw being played out in the political arena was how in a democracy people's personal concerns can become political if they use their voices -- and their votes -- to define them.

That represents a maturing of politics. The gender gap we

heard so much about in the American election was simply a measure of how women, who are experts on the hazards and vicissitudes of life, voted their self interest and their values. In so doing they delivered a clear message that the issues they care about deserve to be on the front burner of national politics.

I have come up with my own term for this phenomenon. Like some of you, I studied political science in college. I have followed politics closely in my years as a citizen activist and political spouse. And I have come to a fairly good understanding of the historic concept of *realpolitik* among and between nations.

What women are saying today -- loudly and clearly -- is that national politics is not just about *realpolitik*. It's also about *real life politik*, how we live together.

I realize there will be women who disagree with me and with each other about specific issues and where the balance of power between and among institutions and individuals should rest. In my country, some women believe the President and Congress over-extended government's power in legislating family leave and the length of maternity hospital stays. In contrast, other women think government needs more power to control economic forces that can disrupt the lives of families and communities.

And some women are just plain squeamish when the subject of power arises. It is something, they believe, that should be discussed quietly behind the scenes and exercised -- if at all -- by women only within the scope of their personal lives.

Regardless of where we stand on any particular issue or on the larger question of balancing the powers in our lives, we must acknowledge that much is at stake for women collectively in this debate. Not just in the United States but here in Australia and around the world.

Will democracies on every continent come to understand that issues affecting women are not soft or marginal, but are central to the progress and prosperity of every nation?

Will public and private institutions help empower women with the tools they need to expand their choices and take responsibility for their lives? And by that I mean, among other things, will education be affordable and accessible to all women so that they can acquire the skills and knowledge they need to help themselves and contribute to society? Will businesses initiate policies that make work more family-friendly, like child care, flexible hours, or parental leave? Will employers value women by paying them equal pay for equal work?

Will law enforcement and justice systems act more

efficiently to protect women from violations of their legal rights, particularly from violence in their own homes?

Will financial institutions provide credit for women -- especially poor women who, with access to small loans, can lift themselves and their families out of poverty?

Will individual women be respected for the choices they make about family, work and personal growth -- and will they be able to make those choices free of the burden of other people's and society's expectations? Will we stop pigeon-holing women and invoking stereotypes that limit their potential? Will we admit that there is no formula for being a successful or fulfilled woman in today's society? That one can choose full-time motherhood and homemaking. Or be committed to work outside the home without marriage or children. Or, like most of us today, balance work and family responsibilities. And that each of our choices will be supported and respected.

Yesterday at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra my husband and I visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. One of the honor guards was a woman. I was heartened that she had the freedom to choose military service as a way to fulfill her aspirations. This was the right choice for her. It would not necessarily be the right choice for me, or for many of you. But we should all be able to celebrate the diversity of experiences that women are choosing for themselves today.

And finally, will we acknowledge, once and for all, that issues of concern to women do not just affect women but affect men too?

These are the questions we are struggling to answer. They are about the balance of power and about the balance we seek in our lives and in the larger community we share.

I welcome the debate. It is a great debate. It is a contentious debate. It is a necessary debate for any democracy on the eve of a new century.

And I am optimistic that women will help to shape the answers we seek. I'm optimistic because I have met women throughout the world who have seized this moment to make their voices heard on behalf of themselves and democracy's values. I have met women in Northern Ireland -- Catholics and Protestants -- who are working together to address the root causes of sectarian violence. I have met women in South Africa -- blacks and whites -- who helped lead the struggle to end apartheid. I have met women in Bosnia -- Croats, Serbs and Muslims -- who are transcending long-standing ethnic hatreds to keep the peace in that war-torn land. I have met women in Russia, Poland, the Czech

Republic, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, the Baltic region and in Mongolia who are leading the effort to build democratic governments, free market economies and civil society from the ruins of dictatorship. I have met women in South America who are joining forces to improve literacy and health care for women and children throughout the continent. And I have met women in South and East Asia who are working to provide economic opportunity for the poorest of the poor through small loans and credit.

I have met women in my own country who have come together to make their streets safer, their schools stronger, and the environment cleaner. And just in the few days I have been here, I have met women who are enriching this nation through their contributions to politics, law, science, education, the arts, journalism and so much else.

Some of the women I have met are famous. But most are not. They are not high-level diplomats or professional negotiators. They have not been elected to office. They aren't wealthy or connected in the right social circles.

They simply took it upon themselves to get organized and to make their voices heard. They had faith in their own capacity to affect change. And they were not going to wait around for someone else to do it for them.

So I am hopeful. Because every country and every time has its Caroline Chisholm, Edith Cowan, and Mother Mary McKillop -- women who, well known or not, understand that we must find common ground. And that on that common ground we will build a society that is in balance, where our democratic values are alive and where individuals can live up to their own God-given potentials.

Mary Wollstonecraft once said "I do not wish women to have power over men, but over themselves."

That is what we are all striving for. This is what will ensure progress for women and their families, safeguard democracy, and make the world a better place for our children and ourselves. That is the challenge women face in the 21st century.

Thank you very much.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 18, 1997

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
TO THE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP FORUM

MRS. CLINTON: (in progress) -- your energy and your enthusiasm and your commitment to WLF and to the issues that we are all joined in supporting and advocating for. I want to thank Cynthia again and Chris and all the members of the executive board for your hard work and your continuing commitment to WLF. And it is very exciting to be gathered for this 4th annual national issues conference.

Now, I particularly want to thank my friend and our WLF honorary chair, Tipper Gore. She has really been the driving force behind the WLF from the very beginning and has nurtured it along and given it the attention and care that it needed. And I must say that her commitment on so many levels is an inspiration to those of us who know her and work with her. And I wanted personally to thank her for her countless ways of supporting not only the President and Vice President, but me and so many of the rest of us in this room.

You know, we haven't had a chance to get together in a somewhat manageable group since the election and the inaugural. I have seen many of you on different occasions and have been able to express my appreciation to you, but I want to do that again. I think that there's no doubt that had it not been for your commitment to the principles of the Democratic Party, to your belief that women had an essential role to play in the 1996 campaign and you determined to play it; had it not been for your networking, your speaking out, I don't know that we would have had the same outcome in the elections, from the popular ticket on down.

I honestly believe that the kind of effort that so many of you made in gathering the energy and resources that were necessary to make the case about the kind of country we are working to build was critical to the outcome of the elections in 1996. And I want to thank you, thank you for what you did together; thank you for what you did in your individual capacities.

As Tipper and I traveled around the country during that campaign, we always looked forward to the WLF events because they were raucous, rowdy, enthusiastic, energetic gatherings where the rooms that had been designed for a thousand were bursting at the seams, and people at the last minute were looking around for even larger meeting rooms. So we always left really energized. And I think that that made a big difference in how we saw the campaign and how we carried it out. And I hope it did for you as well.

Because really, the campaign and what you did was not an end in itself. Yes, we were thrilled and very gratified that the President and Vice President were reelected. But Tipper and I can find other ways to spend our time, in a slightly more private setting than the way we do now. (Laughter.) And we would continue to be committed to the issues. But what was really at stake was not that the reelection of the President and the Vice President, it was really a continuing statement about what our national values are and what issues are worthy of our support. And I hope you realize that you were part of making history.

When the President, at his inaugural, stood before all of us on that glorious day, and said, you know, government is not the solution, but it's not the problem either, that was a direct repudiation of the political philosophy that had tried to dominate the American political scene, starting when President Reagan uttered those words about more than 10 years ago now, at his first inaugural. And what my husband was saying is, we have to quit looking for ideological and purely partisan solutions. We have to quit drawing artificial lines between one another.

Yes, it's not the problem; yes, it's not the solution. Who doesn't believe that? What we have to do is create a new partnership between a new defined governmental responsibility and all the rest of us.

And so there was a very important political moment at the 1997 inaugural because it began to put to rest, we hope, the unnecessary divisive, partisan rankling over whether or not the United States is a nation with national commitments and national obligations, national responsibilities, where we are all bound together and where we do have a stake in the success of one another.

Now, how we work all that out is what the political process is for. Some people are always a little bit concerned when they see the hard work of politics being done -- you know that old saying, there are two things you should never see being made, legislation and sausage. (Laughter.) Well, it isn't always a pleasant sight to see how democracy works and there are those who grow faint-hearted and weary and say -- let me out, I can't deal with this.

Well, then that leaves the playing field of democracy to those who have very specific, ideological, personal, commercial interests that they will wish to exploit and advance. And so part of what we are attempting to do, and what the President and the Vice President and the WLF are engaged in doing is broadening the base of participation -- as Senator Daschle said, reigniting the belief

that as citizens our goals, our voices, our contributions, our involvement count. And the more we can be involved the more likely we are to see democracy work.

Now, you may know that I was privileged to go to Africa just a few weeks ago and to travel through a lot of countries that are now struggling with how you define democracy, who are attempting to throw off one-party rule, undo the problems of the past, create new conditions for people to be involved. And it was very exciting to see firsthand. But I could also see how difficult the challenges were, because democracy is never easy. It is a complicated business -- millions and millions and millions of equals to try to govern themselves. And there are always difficulties along the road and there is no such thing as a perfect democracy. There is not one in the world.

We are still trying to make a more perfect union as we commit ourselves to doing at the beginning of our country. But there is not any more important task for anyone privileged enough as we are to live in a democracy than to be committed to making it work, and to be willing to stand up and have one's voice heard, have one's vote count.

Now, when a democracy is as old as ours, then there gets to be a little fatigue and people take for granted the blessings that we have. And they don't feel the necessity for being involved. They don't turn out to vote for days and stand in line for hours as they did with the first national election in South Africa. They don't feel the kind of energy that it takes to keep a democracy vital is their business, it's somebody else's concern. And, of course, that undermines the effectiveness of any democratic government.

And so what you are doing is not just supporting the Democratic Party, which is very important because of our principles and our beliefs that has to be continually championed, but you are supporting democracy, with a small d, and there isn't any more important task for any citizen.

As some of you know, the kind of work that WLF has done to reach out and involve women has caught on all over our country. I look around and I see people who have been involved with the WLF from the very beginning and I see people for whom this is your first meeting. And what is then very important about this is that although the WLF is not exclusively a women's organization -- we are glad to have the men here among us -- it is primarily aimed at enlisting the energy and resources of women. And that is important for a number of reasons.

I know from my own travels around the world, and others of you who have done it as well, that where women are committed to be participants in their society, where they are actively involved in the democratic life of their country, their countries flourish. They are able to make decisions for themselves that they feel give them authority over their own futures, to make commitments to their education, their families, their larger society.

And what we found in the 1996 election here at home is that many of the real life issues and concerns that we as women have always talked about around kitchen tables, around water

coolers, as we have struggled to make sense of our own lives and to talk about and help create the kind of communities we wanted for ourselves and future generations -- what we have found is -- and I would argue in large measure because of efforts that you have made, those issues are now finally at the top of the political agenda.

We saw that yesterday when the President and I hosted a conference on early childhood development. It was a remarkable event where leading scientists, pediatricians, psychologists, educators, business leaders came together to talk about what science has now told us which, thankfully, many of us knew instinctively or because of our own parents and grandparents, about the importance of those first three years of life and how we could use that information at home, in school, in the workplace and in the halls of government.

Now, maybe a dozen years ago or certainly longer than that it might have been inconceivable for the President of the United States to take time out of his schedule dealing with what people then thought of as the really important issues of the time to talk about and listen to information and research about the importance of reading to and cuddling with and singing to and talking with babies. As the Vice President said yesterday, that was a different concept of the bully pulpit. It was sort of the bully cradle. (Laughter.)

And there are some even today that would argue not only does the President not belong in a conference in the White House doing that, but there's no role really for the government to be talking and working on that. That is an issue that should be left to individuals and to families.

Well, that is not what the President or the Vice President or Tipper or I believe. We believe that preparing our children from the challenges of the 21st century is the primary challenge facing the United States. It, more than nearly anything else one can imagine, will determine the quality of life, the strength of our country, the leadership the United States plays in the rest of the world. (Applause.)

And so, we want to continue talking about these real life issues. The first piece of legislation the President signed, Family and Medical Leave, was built on by expanding Head Start; creating something called Early Head Start, which we want to expand even more because it targets children who are at risk from zero to three, the period we now know is so crucial. The President has fought to make access to nutrition and education and care available to the WIC program. And childhood immunizations have been raised in the last four years in our country to the highest level they have been, and we still have work to do.

Those are just some of the things that this administration has worked on not because they were nice ideas, not because they were political issues for certain constituencies, but because the President and those of us who are working with him know that trying to create the conditions for the successful raising of children is one of the best ways we can guarantee that our democracy continues, to give every child a chance to live up to his or her God-given potential, to play a role in our society.

And so, when we talk about these issues and what we are now facing on the legislative and political agenda, I want to link it to the work that you have been doing because too often these in the past have been viewed as women's issues. Well, isn't it nice that Tipper is heading a campaign to try and do something about this? And isn't it nice that Hillary Clinton's talking about brain development, the first three years. And it's really a nice show of solidarity to their husbands to kind of show up and lead the cheers. But, what does that have to do with the business of the nation?

And I've begun to talk about this as some of you have heard before in a way that, I think, makes some sense and puts it into context, because I was, frankly, surprised and disappointed when during the 1996 campaign, the so-called gender gap was described by some as the feminization of politics -- that if the President of United States goes around talking about family leave or insuring poor children or making it possible for more and more children to be immunized, he's just doing it to try to get women's votes, and that's unfortunate because our President should be talking about really significant issues.

Well, I think that the women of this country were ahead of the curve when it came to determining what politics will mean in the future because it is not just about traditional ideals of realpolitik. Yes, our relations with China, our efforts to try to bring peace to the Middle East or Bosnia or Northern Ireland, our support for democracy and prosperity around the world are critical. And that kind of realpolitik engagement is a necessary part of what it means to be the indispensable nation of the world today.

But that is not all there is to politics or democracy as we end the 20th century. I think it is a blessing that we are also now talking about what I call real-life politik. How is it we will raise our children -- (applause.) Because of the conference yesterday and the other efforts of the administration and because of your work, more and more Americans are understanding that if we don't try to focus on the issues that affect our children, then our country will never reach its full potential and our democracy will not be as strong as it needs to be.

So I urge all of us to continue to help involve more women and to have the kind of understanding that you have exhibited at this issues conference about the way we are interconnected, and how it does make a difference in our own lives if we are committed to helping other people fulfill the potential of their lives as well.

This is a very exciting time to be involved in American politics. It is not an easy time for those of us who are involved, as we all are, because it is a challenging time. But think about why there is so much challenge going on. I think in large measure it is because there are great issues at stake. They sometimes become obscured in the daily back-and-forth of what makes the news headlines, but what's really going on under the surface are tectonic shifts that are very much going to determine what kind of politics and nation we have in the next century. And it is worth fighting for. It is worth

fighting for issues like Head Start and child care and higher education standards and better health coverage. (Applause.)

So I hope that you will take from this conference not only a lot of very good information which I've heard has been exchanged and good ideas from the speakers who have addressed you, a renewed commitment on your own part to reaching even more people, talking even more vigorously about what is at stake at this point in history in our country, and giving even more women the chance to be involved, to find their own voices, to speak out for what they in their hearts believe, and for the kind of country they want to help build.

You know, it's a very exciting time, it's a very challenging time, and there are lessons around the world about how it can also be a sobering time. One cannot travel in the places that I have been without being reminded about how fragile life can be, about the odds that people all over the world face every single day, about the work that the vast majority of women do just to keep their body and soul and their families together.

And I want to end with one wonderful moment from my trip. I was in Uganda. Now, the recent history of Uganda is a sobering message about the inhumanity of man to man, and dictatorships and tyrants. And while I was in Kampala, I visited with a group of Rwandan women who had just survived the genocide that afflicted their country. And I walked into this very ordinary looking conference room to see these beautifully dressed women in their traditional dresses, sitting around a table. And their faces were tired, their eyes were somewhat hooded and shadowed, and they talked in very soft voices.

And the woman who was the leader of the group, who is now a minister in the Rwanda government, in a very matter-of-fact unemotional way, described to me what had happened to her and her family and many of the women and the families they represented around the table. And she pointed out one young woman who explained in French how she had been macheted and how she had nearly lost her arm and tried to keep her arm intact while she searched for medical care. And finally infection set in and she lost her arm. And another woman talked about being in one of those horrific refugee camps that Tipper visited, and what it was like to be in a situation where all the rules of what she thought human behavior and conduct were no longer applied.

Then they handed me an album, and the album consisted of page after page of some of the most horrific pictures you can imagine -- bones and skulls and bodies and orphans, deserted places. But as I turned the pages, all of a sudden I saw people on construction sites. I saw gatherings of people that were described to me as meetings. And by the end of the album, I had moved from the horrors of the genocide to the possibilities of the rebuilding and the renewal. And I could hardly take it all in. And one of the women said, you know, it really makes a difference whether people believe they and their neighbors can live peacefully together and each person's child is a child of God. She said, we lost that, and now we have to find it again.

And later on that same day, I went to a large conference center where I spoke to about 2,000 or so Ugandans, mostly women. And one of the ways that Uganda has tried to deal with its past is by opening as much as possible participation to all people, particularly women. They have a woman vice president. She said to me, one of the ways we have healed ourselves is by making sure what women care about is what the country cares about. Because before all that anyone cared about was power and money -- not children, not the future for everyone. We will make sure that what women care about is what the country cares about. (Applause.)

I hope that we continue to work to be sure that what America cares about is what women about -- without apology, without being defensive, without giving ground to those who try to belittle and deride concerns about what happens to babies in their first three years as being unworthy of presidential attention. And instead, I hope that we will keep in mind the energy that you have seen in this conference. And I will take it and put it into my movie of my time in Africa and remember with such pleasure the faces of the women I saw there and the faces of the women I see here, and to know that we so much in common because of the kind of future we want to build together.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT THE ASSOCIATION FOR
ENTERPRISE OPPORTUNITY CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

APRIL 24, 1998

Thank you very much. Well, what a crowd of enthusiastic advocates, and practitioners, and supporters of one of the most significant movements sweeping our country and the world. It is such an honor to be here with you. I want to start by thanking Senator Kennedy -- who I know has to get back to the Senate -- for his introduction, but more than that, for his energy and his commitment to the causes that really do change people's lives at the grass roots level. He's given courageous leadership in opening opportunities for America's citizens in every field. I am delighted that he has a new bill calling for greater public/private investments in education and training programs for micro-entrepreneurs. If his past record is any guide, I believe that we will see a program like that enacted, because when Senator Kennedy makes it a priority, somehow or another, it seems to happen.

You know, I can remember not so long ago, certainly, when I first became acquainted with the work of micro-enterprise and micro-credit programs that we could not have had such a large conference devoted to the importance of these micro-enterprise programs. Because there weren't that many people who understood the significance of this movement and who had in any way participated in it. But now we are building a movement across the country and around the world. Everyone must play a role and everyone must contribute if we are to be as successful as we know we can.

I want to thank the Association for Enterprise Opportunity for sponsoring this national event. I want to pay particular respect to its two Chairs, Mary Matthews and Christine Benuzzi, for inviting me to join you here today. Appreciation, also, to the Host committee from the Virginia Micro-enterprise Network, particularly, Becky Clay Christensen, and the members of AEO's Conference Planning Committee, especially Welthy Soni, its Chair, and so many others who have worked to make this conference possible.

Now, I saw some of you last year at the White House as I joined the President and Senator Kennedy at the Presidential Awards Ceremony for the top micro-enterprise organizations throughout the country. I also joined Secretary Rubin in speaking with you via video at your 1996 Conference in Rhode Island. That's when I first announced these awards as part of America's commitment to the Beijing Women's Conference Agenda. So now it's a pleasure to be with you again -- only this time in person.

We are here, first, to celebrate our progress. We know that micro-enterprise works, here

in the United States and around the globe. I have seen that progress first hand -- here at home in Washington, D.C. and in Denver, Colorado. I've seen it in places as far apart as India and Nicaragua, and all points in between on I think every continent except Antarctica. I know that micro-enterprise and micro-credit programs work because I've had first hand experience.

As the Senator said, when my husband was Governor of Arkansas and he was working very hard to increase economic opportunity for some of the poorest people in our country, we began looking for innovative ways to do just that. That's how I heard about the work of the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh. I learned about the efforts modeled on Grameen at South Shore Bank in Chicago. Ever since that exposure to these first programs that I was aware of, I have seen the countless success stories that have slowly, but steadily changed people's lives and maybe even, more importantly, developed that support for a good idea that is now beginning to be replicated.

We have so many things to be grateful for, those of us who support micro-enterprise. Over the past five years, the traditional support organizations serving economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs are increasingly joined by a broader spectrum of partners --such as those involved in social services, housing, and public health. Today, church groups, and manufacturing organizations, and chambers of commerce are even recognizing how important this movement is to opening up the economy and opportunity to more Americans. I think it is critical that we work to strengthen and expand these partnerships.

We're also changing how we're helping people to create and develop and sustain their own businesses. Training and technical assistance have become an even more critical component for success. I want to commend AEO for its commitment to sharing those skills with entrepreneurs around the country. Because we all know that you don't just get your credit and go out and run a successful business. To run a small business -- even a micro-business -- people must learn how to develop a business plan, understand the importance of such things as having checking and savings accounts, and a greater knowledge about the rules and regulations that govern business in our country. These are the tools of business, and our most disadvantaged entrepreneurs, in particular, must have access to them to succeed and must have mentoring so they know how to use them.

Communities are expanding efforts to insure that fledgling entrepreneurs have greater access to credit and loans. And those loans, of course, as you all know, are a great business investment from the other side of the ledger. The default rate for many micro-loans is extremely low -- on average about 2.2 percent -- and the repayment rate is extremely high. I'm often saying to my friends in banking and to groups that contain bankers that if they had more customers like these entrepreneurs, they would do a better job on their own bottom line, and they ought to look out to lending to those people. One of the most exciting developments to my way of thinking, is the progress we're seeing when individual entrepreneurs are joining forces and sharing resources with each other.

About ten years ago, Bill and I went to Northern Italy; I don't know if any of you have had a chance to visit some of the enterprises that have been organized there. Northern Italy has one of the most thriving economies in the entire world. It is doing far better financially than the southern part of its country and in large measure because they had a tradition of guilds and organized networks that were established by the church or by political parties. But they began to understand a couple of decades ago that for small businesses to flourish they needed modern resources and tools. They needed to know how to market, they needed to keep their books right, they needed a way to communicate effectively with trade opportunities and export mechanisms around the world.

And it was impossible for an individual baker, or textile manufacturer, or other small entrepreneur to be able to do that on his or her own. So they began banding together, creating associations among small businesses, primarily businesses that had the same kind of needs and produced similar products. As a result, they shared costs, so that they hired one bookkeeper who took care of the books of 10, 20, 30, or a 100 organizations. They hired one person to market all of their goods, so they only had to pay and share the expenses to send one person to a trade fair in Rome, or in Munich, or in the United States. So they really created the opportunity to leverage their resources and to share the costs.

This is so important and I'm delighted it's beginning to happen here in the United States. Small entrepreneurs are expanding their markets beyond their neighborhood borders. They're getting into industries like day care, elder care, recycling. And they're doing it in a smarter way by understanding that alone they couldn't provide the services or meet the costs and expenses a modern business needs, but by joining together in association they can.

For example, I heard a story about a woman living in a poor, rural area who was producing salsa in her home. She didn't have the money to move her operation out of her kitchen to expand her businesses, but it was a good business. So people in the community recognized her potential and donated an old building with commercial equipment and leased it to her and gave her support and the technical assistance to make the leap to larger scale production. Now, she's not only producing more salsa -- which happens to be one of my favorite foods in the world, and at some other occasion I'll tell you why, I think it keeps me healthy. She's also attracted other entrepreneurs, who are now making jars and related products, who are pooling their common efforts to produce services and products that enhance economic opportunity far beyond the woman with her salsa.

There's growing evidence that efforts to expand the base of support and implement new strategies are having a very positive impact. Today, a three-year study of American micro-enterprise borrowers is being released by Acción International. It shows that after three loans, an entrepreneur's take home pay increased an average of \$455 a month. Low income participants are doing even better. Business profits also shot up dramatically after three loans. So, we're learning that it takes a series of investment opportunities, the kind of mentoring that is required. The first loan doesn't do it, because you make a lot of mistakes and you have to learn a lot. The

second loan you improve your skills, you make more progress. By the third loan you're really ready to take off and it makes a difference in people's lives.

This study also confirms what many of us have learned from talking with micro-entrepreneurs around the country, and the world. The people who participate in micro-enterprise define their success far beyond financial gain. They also talk about a sense of pride, and control over their future, greater flexibility in their family lives, and the pleasure they feel as they become more active participants in their communities.

So taking all this good news, which you will be discussing at this conference, you've already heard from some very important and impressive speakers about what is happening in micro-enterprise. What is our mission, those of us who support and believe in this movement? How do we take our individual experiences, the success stories we've seen and try to meet the ambitious goals -- set by the AEO at this conference -- to assist one million low income and economically disadvantaged individuals achieve economic self sufficiency in the next ten years?

Well, that's really the challenge that we face. I'm very pleased that the administration is committed to taking some of the steps necessary with you to actually realize this goal. You've already heard from many of the leaders in our federal agencies who are expanding support for micro-enterprise initiatives across the country. Secretary Rubin and his colleagues at the Department of Treasury have announced the opening of the application process for the second series of Presidential Awards for Micro-enterprise Development. The President has requested \$125 million for the Treasury's CDFI Fund, and you will have to be there lobbying and advocating on behalf of this investment. We will need your support.

We also know that the Administrator of the Small Business Administration, Aida Alvarez -- who was with me at a micro-enterprise event in Temuco, Chile just a few days ago -- is making even more of a commitment by the SBA to micro-enterprise. The SBA's commitment to substantially expand its micro-loan program, and help spread the word about the benefits of such loans, will assist us in making progress toward the AEO goal.

We cannot rely solely on the public sector, even if it is as committed as my husband and his administration are. Every one of us have to do more to bring the word about the success of micro-enterprise to the private and not-for-profit sectors. We have to create more challenges to the entire society to recognize the stake we all have in creating economic opportunity for all Americans, but, particularly, low income Americans. We also have to make the connection between micro-enterprise and other issues that are essential for helping working families succeed.

For example, there's a vital connection between our economic potential as individuals, families, and communities and the availability of safe, quality, affordable child care. We also know there is a vital connection between our efforts to rebuild communities, make them safer, revitalize neighborhoods, and the need to expand micro-enterprise opportunities so people feel a

stake in these common efforts to improve our lives.

Many people have asked me about micro-credit around the world and I'm always delighted to regale them with the stories that I come home with, whether they are from a meeting in the Adams Morgan section of Washington, or in Denver, or anywhere else I have been. Just recently though, I had one of those great moments personally when we were in Uganda. During our visit to Africa, I was able to take both my husband and President Museveni to a village far out in the countryside, about a 45 minute helicopter ride from Kampala to visit a micro-credit project, a FINCA borrowing group. And I think it probably, I may be wrong and I'd love to hear from someone later, I think it probably was the first time one head of state, let alone two heads of state visited a micro-credit project on the ground in a country where it is actually working to change lives.

Now, I believe that there are many stories like that, but getting that level of visibility, so that the traveling press and those who follow the travels of Presidents around the world knew that this was important enough for both the President of the United States and the President of Uganda to fit into their schedules sends a very strong message. That message has to reverberate around the globe and it has to penetrate into board rooms of corporations, and directors of banks, and everywhere that there is credit that could be used to enhance the opportunities for loans to entrepreneurs.

Now, we are going to do all that we can at the national level to keep pushing this agenda forward. That's one of the reasons that I am so pleased that Kate McKee, who many of you know has worked closely with AEO, is soon to become the Director of the Office of Micro-enterprise Development at USAID. The economic challenges we face in the United States are not, obviously, the same as those faced by the poor women of Uganda, of Bangladesh, but there are similarities. There are lessons we can learn. The role that USAID is playing, not only in promoting micro-enterprise around the world, but in bringing those lessons home, what they call "Lessons without Borders," is a critical part of raising the public's consciousness about the role of micro-enterprise. But, ultimately, when all is said and done, what really matters is what happens in the lives of individual people who borrow money, learn skills, develop business opportunities.

I want to mention two women who are here this morning whose dreams are being fulfilled because of their involvement with micro-enterprise. Congratulations to Sonja Thornsberry, from Swords Creek, Virginia. Sonja's husband was injured in a mining accident and was suddenly faced with supporting her family. She's now running Family Motors, a used car company -- thanks to the skills and support she received from a micro-enterprise program.

Congratulations to Janice Anderson, from Baltimore, Maryland. Janice's health made it difficult for her to work a regular 8 to 4, 9 to 5 job, but she knew she always wanted to be self-employed. She borrowed \$500 from her parents to purchase a computer, she received training from a women's entrepreneur group and a small loan -- and now runs a small profitable office

service business out of her home. She has a plaque in her office that reads, "Lord, help me to remember that nothing is going to happen to me today that you and I together can't handle." Next month Janice will receive the SBA's "1998 Welfare to Work Business Owner of the Year" from Maryland's Governor Glendening.

Now, I also want to tell you a little bit about the banners that are hanging up here behind me on the podium. They're made by Carol Willoughby, an entrepreneur from Duluth, Minnesota -- who began working out of her home making church and wedding banners when her husband was virtually unemployed. In 1991, AEO began providing her the tools to expand her business. Today, she's hired her husband, and provided part-time employment for her neighbors. In 1991, her gross sales were \$6,000, today they are \$60,000.

I want to congratulate Carol, Sonja, Janice, all of you who have similar success stories to tell. You were given the opportunity. You were provided access to credit. You may have been given some technical assistance, some education, and skills training, but your success is due to you, to your energy, your ideas, and your commitment. The name of Carol's company appropriately enough is "Let the Whole World Know."

Well, I wish we had a banner big enough to string from one end of our country to the other bringing home the message of micro-credit and enterprise and what AEO is doing but we don't. Even Carol's company can't produce a banner that big. But instead, we have all of us, and each of us should spread the success stories we know about, bring new partners to the table, continue to draw strength from each other, learn how better to do what we are doing. There's always room for getting it better.

I know that I'm convinced more than ever that providing economic opportunity, giving people a hand up -- not a hand out -- giving people a chance to be responsible for themselves and their families is what is the most important goal we have to give that sense of dignity, and respect, and self-confidence to every man and woman in our land. By doing so, we get some very important extra added benefits. We do build stronger families, we do build stronger communities, we do build a stronger country, and we, then, see the results which move us all closer to realizing the ideals that we set forth in our founding documents and what we care so much about as Americans.

So thank you, thank you for what you are doing everyday and what you will do in the years ahead. There is no more important task being done by anyone anywhere in our country today.

Thank you very much.

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First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
150th Anniversary of the First Women's Rights Convention
Seneca Falls, New York
July 16, 1998

Thank you for gathering here in such numbers for this important celebration. I want to thank Governor Pataki and Congresswoman Slaughter and all the elected officials who are here with us today. I want to thank Mary Anne and her committee for helping to organize such a great celebration. I want to thank Bob Stanton and the entire Park Service staff for doing such an excellent job with the historic site. I want to thank our choirs. I thought the choirs really added; I want to thank our singers whom we've already heard from and will hear from because this is a celebration and we need to think about it in such terms.

But for a moment, I would like you to take your minds back a hundred and fifty years. Imagine if you will that you are Charlotte Woodward, a nineteen-year-old glove maker working and living in Waterloo. Everyday you sit for hours sewing gloves together, working for small wages you cannot even keep, with no hope of going on in school or owning property, knowing that if you marry, your children and even the clothes on your body will belong to your husband.

But then one day in July, 1848, you hear about a women's rights convention to be held in nearby Seneca Falls. It's a convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious conditions and rights of women. You run from house to house and you find other women who have heard the same news. Some are excited, others are amused or even shocked, and a few agree to come with you, for at least the first day.

When that day comes, July 19, 1848, you leave early in the morning in your horse-drawn wagon. You fear that no one else will come; and at first, the road is empty, except for you and your neighbors. But suddenly, as you reach a crossroads, you see a few more wagons and carriages, then more and more all going towards Wesleyan Chapel. Eventually you join the others to form one long procession on the road to equality.

Who were the others traveling that road to equality, traveling to that convention? Frederick Douglass, the former slave and great abolitionist, was on his way there and he described the participants as "few in numbers, moderate in resources, and very little known in the world. The most we had to connect us was a firm commitment that we were in the right and a firm faith that the right must ultimately prevail." In the wagons and carriages, on foot or horseback, were women like Rhoda Palmer. Seventy years later in 1918, at the age of one-hundred and two, she would cast her first ballot in a New York state election.

Also traveling down that road to equality was Susan Quinn, who at fifteen will become the

youngest signer of the Declaration of Sentiments. Catharine F. Stebbins, a veteran of activism starting when she was only twelve going door to door collecting anti-slavery petitions. She also, by the way, kept an anti-tobacco pledge on the parlor table and asked all her young male friends to sign up. She was woman truly ahead of her time, as all the participants were.

I often wonder, when reflecting back on the Seneca Falls Convention, who of us -- men and women -- would have left our homes, our families, our work to make that journey one hundred and fifty years ago. Think about the incredible courage it must have taken to join that procession. Ordinary men and women, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, husbands and wives, friends and neighbors. And just like those who have embarked on other journeys throughout American history, seeking freedom or escaping religious or political persecution, speaking out against slavery, working for labor rights. These men and women were motivated by dreams of better lives and more just societies.

At the end of the two-day convention, one hundred people, sixty-eight women and thirty-two men, signed the Declaration of Sentiments that you can now read on the wall at Wesleyan Chapel. Among the signers were some of the names we remember today: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright and Frederick Douglass and young Charlotte Woodward. The "Seneca Falls 100," as I like to call them, shared the radical idea that America fell far short of her ideals stated in our founding documents, denying citizenship to women and slaves.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who is frequently credited with originating the idea for the Convention, knew that women were not only denied legal citizenship, but that society's cultural values and social structures conspired to assign women only one occupation and role, that of wife and mother. Of course, the reality was always far different. Women have always worked, and worked both in the home and outside the home for as long as history can record. And even though Stanton herself had a comfortable life and valued deeply her husband and seven children, she knew that she and all other women were not truly free if they could not keep wages they earned, divorce an abusive husband, own property, or vote for the political leaders who governed them. Stanton was inspired, along with the others who met, to rewrite our Declaration of Independence, and they boldly asserted, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men and women are created equal."

"All men and all women." It was the shout heard around the world, and if we listen, we can still hear its echoes today. We can hear it in the voices of women demanding their full civil and political rights anywhere in the world. I've heard such voices and their echoes from women, around the world, from Belfast to Bosnia to Beijing, as they work to change the conditions for women and girls and improve their lives and the lives of their families. We can even hear those echoes today in Seneca Falls. We come together this time not by carriage, but by car or plane, by train or foot, and yes, in my case, by bus. We come together not to hold a convention, but to celebrate those who met here one hundred and fifty years ago, to commemorate how far we have traveled since then, and to challenge ourselves to persevere on the journey that was begun all those many years ago.

We are, as one can see looking around this great crowd, men and women, old and young,

different races, different backgrounds. We come to honor the past and imagine the future. That is the theme the President and I have chosen for the White House Millennium Council's efforts to remind and inspire Americans as we approach the year 2000. This is my last stop on the Millennium Council's tour to Save America's Treasures -- those buildings, monuments, papers and sites -- that define who we are as a nation. They include not only famous symbols like the Star Spangled Banner and not only great political leaders like George Washington's revolutionary headquarters, or creative inventors like Thomas Edison's invention factory, but they include also the women of America who wrote our nation's past and must write its future.

Women like the ones we honor here and, in fact, at the end of my tour yesterday, I learned that I was following literally in the footsteps of one of them, Lucretia Mott, who, on her way to Seneca Falls, stopped in Auburn to visit former slaves and went on to the Seneca Nations to meet with clan mothers, as I did.

Last evening, I visited the home of Mary Ann and Thomas M'Clintock in Waterloo, where the Declaration of Sentiments was drafted, and which the Park Service is planning to restore for visitors if the money needed can be raised. I certainly hope I can return here sometime in the next few years to visit that restoration.

Because we must tell and retell, learn and relearn, these women's stories, and we must make it our personal mission, in our everyday lives, to pass these stories on to our daughters and sons. Because we cannot -- we must not -- ever forget that the rights and opportunities that we enjoy as women today were not just bestowed upon us by some benevolent ruler. They were fought for, agonized over, marched for, jailed for and even died for by brave and persistent women and men who came before us.

Every time we buy or sell or inherit property in our own name -- let us thank the pioneers who agitated to change the laws that made that possible.

Every time, every time we vote, let us thank the women and men of Seneca Falls, Susan B. Anthony and all the others, who tirelessly crossed our nation and withstood ridicule and the rest to bring about the 19th Amendment to the Constitution.

Every time we enter an occupation -- a profession of our own choosing and receive a paycheck that reflect earnings equal to a male colleague, let us thank the signers and women like Kate Mullaney, who's house I visited yesterday, in Troy, New York

Every time we elect a woman to office -- let us thank ground breaking leaders like Jeannette Rankin and Margaret Chase Smith, Hattie Caraway, Louise Slaughter, Bella Abzug, Shirley Chisholm -- all of whom proved that a woman's place is truly in the House, and in the Senate, and one day, in the White House, as well.

And every time we take another step forward for justice in this nation -- let us thank extraordinary women like Harriet Tubman, who's home in Auburn I visited yesterday, and who

escaped herself from slavery, and, then risked her life, time and again, to bring at least two hundred other slaves to freedom as well.

Harriet Tubman's rule for all of her underground railroad missions was to keep going. Once you started--no matter how scared you got, how dangerous it became -- you were not allowed to turn back. That's a pretty good rule for life. It not only describes the women who gathered in Wesleyan Chapel in 1848, but it could serve as our own motto for today. We, too, cannot turn back. We, too, must keep going in our commitment to the dignity of every individual -- to women's rights as human rights. We are on that road of the pioneers to Seneca Falls, they started down it 150 years ago. But now, we too, must keep going.

We may not face the criticism and derision they did. They understood that the Declaration of Sentiments would create no small amount of misconception, or misrepresentation and ridicule; they were called mannish women, old maids, fanatics, attacked personally by those who disagreed with them. One paper said, "These rights for women would bring a monstrous injury to all mankind." If it sounds familiar, it's the same thing that's always said when women keep going for true equality and justice.

Those who came here also understood that the convention and the Declaration were only first steps down that road. What matters most is what happens when everyone packs up and goes back to their families and communities. What matters is whether sentiment and resolutions, once made, are fulfilled or forgotten. The Seneca Falls one hundred pledged themselves to petition, and lit the pulpit and used every instrumentality within their power to affect their subjects. And they did. But they also knew they were not acting primarily for themselves. They knew they probably would not even see the changes they advocated in their own lifetime. In fact, only Charlotte Woodward lived long enough to see American women finally win the right to vote.

Those who signed that Declaration were doing it for the girls and women -- for us -- those of us in the twentieth century.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote a letter to her daughters later in life enclosing a special gift and explaining why. "Dear Maggie and Hattie, this is my first speech," she wrote, "it contains all I knew at that time; I give this manuscript to my precious daughters in the hopes that they will finish the work that I have begun." And they have. Her daughter, Harriot Blatch, was the chief strategist of the suffrage movement in New York. Harriot's daughter, Nora Barney, was one of the first women to be a civil engineer. Nora's daughter, Rhoda Jenkins, became an architect. Rhoda's daughter, Colleen Jenkins-Sahlin is an elected official in Greenwich, Connecticut. And her daughter, Elizabeth is a thirteen-year-old, who wrote about the six generations of Stantons in a book called, 33 Things Every Girl Should Know.

So, far into the twentieth century, the work is still being done; the journey goes on. Now, some might say that the only purpose of this celebration is to honor the past, that the work begun here is finished in America, that young women no longer face legal obstacles to whatever education

or employment choices they choose to pursue. And I certainly believe and hope all of you agree that we should, everyday, count our blessings as American women.

I know how much change I have seen in my own life. When I was growing up back in the fifties and sixties, there were still barriers that Mrs. Stanton would have recognized -- scholarships I couldn't apply for, schools I couldn't go to, jobs I couldn't have -- just because of my sex. Thanks to federal laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title 9, and the Equal Pay Act, legal barriers to equality have fallen.

But if all we do is honor the past, then I believe we will miss the central point of the Declaration of Sentiments, which was, above all, a document about the future. The drafters of the Declaration imagined a different future for women and men, in a society based on equality and mutual respect. It falls to every generation to imagine the future, and it our task to do so now.

We know that, just as the women 150 years ago knew, that what we imagine will be principally for our daughters and sons in the 21st century. Because the work of the Seneca Falls Convention is, just like the work of the nation itself, it's never finished, so long as there remain gaps between our ideals and reality. That is one of the great joys and beauties of the American experiment. We are always striving to build and move toward a more perfect union, that we on every occasion keep faith with our founding ideals, and translate them into reality. So what kind of future can we imagine together.

If we are to finish the work begun here -- then no American should ever again face discrimination on the basis of gender, race or sexual orientation anywhere in our country.

If we are to finish the work begun here -- then \$0.76 in a woman's paycheck for every dollar in a man's is still not enough. Equal pay for equal work can once and for all be achieved.

If we are to finish the work begun here -- then families need more help to balance their responsibilities at work and at home. In a letter to Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton writes, "Come here and I will do what I can to help you with your address, if you will hold the baby and make the pudding." Even then, women knew we had to have help with child care. All families should have access to safe, affordable, quality child care.

If we are to finish the work begun here -- then women and children must be protected against what the Declaration called the "chastisement of women," namely domestic abuse and violence. We must take all steps necessary to end the scourge of violence against women and punish the perpetrator. And our country must join the rest of the world, as so eloquently Secretary Albright called for on Saturday night here in Seneca Falls, "Join the rest of the world and ratify the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against women."

If we are to finish the work begun here -- we must do more than talk about family values, we must adopt policies that truly value families -- policies like a universal system of health care

insurance that guarantees every American's access to affordable, quality health care. Policies like taking all steps necessary to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals. Policies like doing all that is necessary at all levels of our society to ensure high quality public education for every boy or girl no matter where that child lives.

If we are to finish the work begun here -- we must ensure that women and men who work full-time earn a wage that lifts them out of poverty and all workers who retire have financial security in their later years through guaranteed Social Security and pensions.

If we are to finish the work begun here -- we must be vigilant against the messages of a media-driven consumer culture that convinces our sons and daughters that what brand of sneakers they wear or cosmetics they use is more important than what they think, feel, know, or do.

And if we are to finish the work begun here -- we must, above all else, take seriously the power of the vote and use it to make our voices heard. What the champions of suffrage understood was that the vote is not just a symbol of our equality, but that it can be, if used, a guarantee of results. It is the way we express our political views. It is the way we hold our leaders and governments accountable. It is the way we bridge the gap between what we want our nation to be and what it is.

But when will the majority of women voters of our country exercise their most fundamental political right? Can you imagine what any of the Declaration signers would say if they learned how many women fail to vote in elections? They would be amazed and outraged. They would agree with a poster I saw in 1996. On it, there is a picture of a woman with a piece of tape covering her mouth and under it, it says, "Most politicians think women should be seen and not heard. In the last election, 54 million women agreed with them."

One hundred and fifty years ago, the women at Seneca Falls were silenced by someone else. Today, women, we silence ourselves. We have a choice. We have a voice. And if we are going to finish the work begun here we must exercise our right to vote in every election we are eligible to vote in.

Much of who women are and what women do today can be traced to the courage, vision, and dedication of the pioneers who came together at Seneca Falls. Now it is our responsibility to finish the work they began. Let's ask ourselves, at the 200th anniversary of Seneca Falls, will they say that today's gathering also was a catalyst for action? Will they say that businesses, labor, religious organizations, the media, foundations, educators, every citizen in our society came to see the unfinished struggle of today as their struggle?

Will they say that we joined across lines of race and class, that we raised up those too often pushed down, and ultimately found strength in each other's differences and resolved in our common cause? Will we, like the champions at Seneca Falls, recognize that men must play a central role in this fight? How can we ever forget the impassioned plea of Frederick Douglass, issued in our defense

of the right to vote?

How can we ever forget that young legislator from Tennessee by the name of Harry Burns, who was the deciding vote in ratifying the 19th Amendment. He was planning on voting "no," but then he got a letter from his mother with a simple message. The letter said, "Be a good boy Harry and do the right thing." And he did! Tennessee became the last state to ratify, proving that you can never ever overestimate the power of one person to alter the course of history, or the power of a little motherly advice.

Will we look back and see that we have finally joined the rest of the advanced economies by creating systems of education, employment, child care and health care that support and strengthen families and give all women real choices in their lives.

At the 200th anniversary celebration, will they say that women today supported each other in the choices we make? Will we admit once and for all there is no single cookie cutter model for being a successful and fulfilled woman today, that we have so many choices? We can choose full-time motherhood or no family at all or like most of us, seek to strike a balance between our family and our work, always trying to do what is right in our lives. Will we leave our children a world where it is self-evident that all men and women, boys and girls are created equal? These are some of the questions we can ask ourselves.

Help us imagine a future that keeps faith with the sentiments expressed here in 1848. The future, like the past and the present, will not and cannot be perfect. Our daughters and granddaughters will face new challenges which we today cannot even imagine. But each of us can help prepare for that future by doing what we can to speak out for justice and equality for women's rights and human rights, to be on the right side of history, no matter the risk or cost, knowing that eventually the sentiments we express and the causes we advocate will succeed because they are rooted in the conviction that all people are entitled by their creator and by the promise of America to the freedom, rights, responsibilities, and opportunity of full citizenship. That is what I imagine for the future. I invite you to imagine with me and then to work together to make that future a reality.

Thank you all very much.

Women's Leadership Forum Speech on Women and Politics

**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
New York, New York
March 3, 1999**

Thank you very much. Thank you all. Thank you. You know, I was asked a few months ago if I would come to New York for a WLF event with a few of my friends, and it is just an amazing sight to behold all of you. And there is an overflow room that I will visit, and I want to tell everybody who's there, which is nearly as big as this room. It gives me just a great boost to see all of you here and supporting causes and concerns that we share. There are many people to thank. Like Laura [Ross], I wish that I could single out many of you whom I know personally and have worked with and have become friends of mine. But I want to start by thanking Laura for her extraordinary leadership and commitment. She is legendary in her willingness to work hard on behalf of causes and candidates that she believes in, and I am very grateful to her.

I also want to thank Roy Romer -- the DNC General Chair, the former long serving governor of Colorado -- who is here. I am delighted that Chuck Schumer could have been with us, and I understand why he needs to hurry back to Washington to be there for whatever vote needs to take place. I am also told that the attorney general, Landslide [Elliott] Spitzer, is here with his wife, Silva. And I am delighted they could be with us. I think that Judith Hope, the New York State party chair, is here as well, and I am glad to greet Judith. And also, I believe that public advocate Mark Green is here and Mark, somewhere. The city council speaker, Peter Valone. I think Peter is with us as well. There are other members of the New York City Council, I don't have names but I want to thank you and maybe you could stand and we could recognize you and express our appreciation that you would come today.

The Manhattan Borough president, Virginia Fields, is here. Thank you, Virginia, for coming. And the Bronx Borough president, Freddie Ferrar, is here somewhere and I want to thank President Ferrar for being with us. The DNC vice-chair, Bill Lynch; DNC finance chair, Beth Dozoretz, I think the first woman to hold that position which makes me very pleased indeed. The WLF national chair, Cynthia Friedman. I want to thank Cynthia and their board members, including my friend Shahara Ahmad-Llewellyn, who is here in the crowd. And the WLF Connecticut Chapter chair, Ronni Ginott, is here as well.

As I said though, I could identify and point out so many of you in this room. There is one person I want especially to thank. Her tireless commitment and her vision about the kind of country we want to be as we move toward a new century has helped to fill this room with people who are both activists and donors. She is a remarkable woman and a real example, and I want to thank Pat Pepper for her leadership and her friendship over the years.

(END OF TAPE 1 -- UNSURE IF ANY REMARKS WERE CUT OFF.)

You might ask, "Why is this an important event? Why are we all gathered here?" Well, I was told that there were some who thought that I might have an announcement to make.... But I don't. But I do have a lot on my mind that I'd like to share with each of you because your being here speaks volumes to me about the kind of politics and the sort of society that we all want to see.

It has been an interesting time in the last six years to see the progress that we have been able to make as a nation. And that is progress that is really the result of the hard work and dedication of countless millions of Americans. Every time a businessman or woman made a decision to reach down deep and take a risk and employ more people and try to expand, to go into new markets and really make a mark for him or herself, that was a decision that helped move us forward. Every time a teacher looked out at a diverse group of students and said, "You know, I'm going to do everything in my power to give these young boys and girls the chance they deserve," that was also a decision for the kind of future we want. Every time a doctor or a nurse said to themselves, "You know, I'm just going to do what I need to do for this patient and I'm going to fulfill my obligations and I'm going to try and make this health care system work for people and not just for accountants or bureaucrats." And that moved us forward as to the kind of country we want to be.

There are countless examples -- people whose names might be in a headline and people who would never be in the newspaper, but you and I know, people who are doing the very best they can every single day to make a contribution and to try to make a difference. Now I know that some people, when we talk about politics or public service, you know you can see that they are put off, they don't know quite how to think about what it is that makes our democracy vibrant.

And I am often asked, as I've told some of you before, "You know, what do you really think about politics?" Or in a slightly more biased tone, "How can you stand politics?" And whenever someone asks me that, I pause for a minute and I say, "Well, you know, have you ever been a member of a family or a church or a synagogue or a civic organization or anything else where you had to work with people to make decisions by consensus, by majority vote, by working out the likes and dislikes of all the people who you were working with?" Because really politics -- with a small "p" -- is how in a democracy we get along with one another. And we make decisions that we think are in our best interest as well as the larger society's or a family's or a group's. And when we think about it that way, more in the line of de Tocqueville and others, we can see how unique this great American experiment is, how lucky we are that we have for more than 200 plus years now understood that politics, in the good times and the bad times, is really the life blood of a democracy.

And so when I stand before all of you, I am really impressed that you are willing to make

a contribution, not only of your financial resources, but of your time and your energy to something political, something that really, we hope, stands for something greater than each of us could achieve on our own. And it is especially important, and the reason why the WLF was formed in 1993, it's especially important that women feel connected to the political process. Because there are so many decisions made at the local, state and national level that truly do affect how we live: how good the schools are that we send our children to, the kind of health care that's available to our parents.

I was especially reminded of that last summer when, with some of you, I took a bus trip that led me from Newburg, New York, to Seneca Falls. And I was able to see a lot of places and visit with people because we were attempting to, in the spirit of the Millennium, think about saving America's treasures. And you know, it's not just the big treasures that we know about -- the Star Spangled Banner -- it's the quieter places. It's the monument in a city center, it's a building that has stood the test of time, it's a document that might be in an attic somewhere. But as I traveled on that bus, stopping and talking and listening, I could see and feel that maybe we don't think often enough about all of the sacrifices that have gone before and all of the blessings we take for granted.

Now I couldn't help but be reminded of that by the time I got to Seneca Falls for the 150th anniversary of the first Women's Rights Convention. Think for a minute of the courage it took -- some of you were there, thousands of people were there -- to pay tribute to these women and some hardy men who thought differently about what was possible.

And I read some of the individual stories about some of the participants. And one young woman in particular made an impression on me. She was a glove maker. You know, I am always a little bit taken aback when people in today's world talk as though women have only worked for the last 10 or 15 years when we know that women have always worked both in the home and outside, sometimes for wages, sometimes and mostly not, but have always made a contribution through their hard work. And certainly in Seneca Falls and in the surrounding area with the industrialization that was building up in the early part of the nineteenth century, there were a lot of women who were working. And one young woman, just 19 years old, heard about this convention that was aimed at talking about the rights that women should have. Because then women couldn't own property in their name; they had no rights to their children if there were a divorce; there were many, many ways in which they were legally prevented from claiming their full citizenship.

And this young glove maker read about this convention and went from door to door in her community encouraging people to come with her, and they did. And they met like-minded women and men who understood what the convention was attempting to do, which was to claim the rights of women to be full human beings, to make the choices that were the ones they thought were best for them.

Now advocating for those rights at that time caused a lot of controversy, and the women

who were there were called all kinds of names -- fanatics and old maids and everything else you can imagine. But they understood something that we also have to understand, and that is that those who advocate for progress and change will often pay a price, but if we persevere, if we see that kind of commitment through the changes that can happen, will benefit maybe us but more likely our daughters and our granddaughters.

Now today when we think about what is happening in the world around us, we can see that women have begun to take their rightful places in the political landscape, not only as candidates who run for or hold office but as contributors, as people who actively participate in the political process as many of you do. And for all of us who are able to participate, who can be here in this glorious room just like those first women at Seneca Falls, we are standing in for countless other women who cannot be here, who couldn't afford the ticket, who wouldn't think they had anything to wear or anything to contribute, who wouldn't see themselves as a political person at all.

And one of our great challenges in the next years is to make sure that our society doesn't split apart along income lines, so that there are some who feel entitled and able to participate in politics and public service and others who feel that there is no place for them and, because of apathy, indifference, fear and insecurity, don't. One of the goals of the last six years has been to try to open up politics and make public service available to as many people as possible. That is part of the reason the WLF began. And for all of us who are asked the question I'm often asked -- "Why would we be involved in politics?" -- let me give you a few answers from just the last six years.

It makes a difference in the lives of men and women, but particularly women for whom the Earned Income Tax Credit and the minimum wage have helped to lift their families and children out of poverty. That didn't happen by accident. It happened because people like the President and the Vice President and others in the Administration and members of Congress understood that if we were a society built upon individual initiative, then we needed to reward work, not penalize it. And for all the people who are working at minimum wage, all the people who are striving to make ends meet, we wanted to send them a message that your work is not in vain. You can get a stake in this society if you are willing to pay the price, if you are willing to work hard.

Our streets are safer in city after city and in neighborhood after neighborhood throughout America. The Crime Bill of 1994 helped to put a strategy for dealing with crime in the forefront of our national consciousness. All during the 1980s people gave speeches against crime, didn't they? They pointed their fingers, they built more prisons and the crime rate kept going up. But when this Administration came into office there was a different attitude. We needed to do something about guns, we needed to put more police on the street, we needed to encourage ideas like community policing. And as a result, crime has decreased for five years in a row around our country.

Now that is the kind of difference, that is the kind of difference that politics can make. That was a bitterly fought battle in Washington. One of the untold stories about the 1994 elections and all the Democratic losses is that many Democratic members of Congress who were persuaded to vote for the Crime Bill and the Brady Bill lost their seats because of the incredible lobbying of the gun lobby against them when they were up for election. But they did the right thing, and every time. We can breathe a little easier. We should thank people who had the courage to make that decision.

Another set of issues that have been a real problem for us in our country is the economic front. Think about where we were in 1992 when there were other countries lecturing the United States about our economic house not being in order. Now here we are after some tough decisions and some tough votes that cost a lot of good people their jobs, including a very brave congresswoman from outside of Philadelphia. I don't know if you remember this, but remember when the President's deficit reduction plan was being voted on? It won by one vote in the House and one vote in the Senate -- thankfully the Vice President's vote. But in the House, Marjorie Margolis Mezvinsky, who came from an affluent district and who knew that it would be a tough sell for her, because we all know that the taxes were raised as well as spending was cut and other things were done that had to be done. When Marjorie walked up that aisle and the Republicans on both sides were waving at her "goodbye, Marjorie," she knew she was putting her seat at risk and she did it anyway because it was the right thing to do. And now we can look back at that historic vote and we can thank her and the other brave members of Congress who stood with the President to do something about our economic situation in this country.

We've also seen some good news on some of the social indicators. We've seen both teen pregnancy rates and abortions finally going down. And that was under a pro-choice president who refused to back down on a woman's right to choose.

You know, it is one thing to deplore a problem and it is another thing to try to solve it. And sometimes it is a lot easier just to point fingers, isn't it? Not to take responsibility but to just keep saying, "Look at what those people are doing," or "Look at that problem." And what we've tried to do, and what I think you can fairly say has happened in the last six years, is that this Administration and many citizen allies like you out in the country have tried to deal with problems, not put them under a rug, not ignore them, but to try to come up with strategies to solve them.

And there are many more examples that I could point to, but the issue is not, as we stand here on the brink of a new century, what we have done but what we will do. What kinds of decisions are we willing to make now as we move forward? We are living in good times and we're proud that we are.

We see the United States as the indispensable nation. We see our economy continuing to grow. We see a lot of progress being made. And so we have to ask ourselves, "Is now the time that we retreat into our own worlds where we say, 'I'm fine, my family's fine, my business is

fine, I don't have to worry about anybody else.'" Or do we take these good times that we have carefully created and have the resources to continue and make good decisions about and try to continue confronting problems and making it possible for us to say that we are together creating progress in our country?

Well now, obviously I believe it's time for us to deal with remaining problems that we confront. I think what drew many of us into the WLF or into politics in general is that we do believe we have a social contract with one another; that we do believe that our country can continue to become better and better if, but only if, a critical majority of people are willing to do what needs to be done when the times arise.

You know, I'm always amused when occasionally I hear that the President or I or someone in the Administration advocating issues that are women's issues or that are not really big, significant issues -- issues like child care, or issues like choice, or issues like education, or issues like health care. And you know, I've always been amused when I hear somebody say that all of this talk about these issues was leading to "the feminization of politics." Now, the commentator who said that, I think, *meant* it as maybe insulting. I don't want to make any conclusions about that, but I've never considered issues like health care, education, child care as women's issues.

I've met lots and lots of fathers and husbands and sons who were just as concerned. The point is that we are attempting to humanize politics. We are attempting to give people the belief that the political actually can work for them. And so when someone asks you to get involved with the WLF or the Democratic Party, think about what it means for all of the people who aren't here today that you would have made a contribution and staked yourself out on the side of issues that are humanizing American politics.

You know, a few weeks ago I was in Brooklyn at a wonderful event at the YMCA there, and I met with a group of women who talked to me very personally about their lives. A single mom who makes \$30,000 a year, which is too much for any kind of subsidy. But after she pays everything she has to pay she doesn't know where to leave her son while she goes to work -- and we all want her to work, and \$30,000 is a good salary. But she can't figure out what to do about child care.

I met another mom who's working with three small children and she doesn't know what to do with them after school. And for her that is not a trivial issue, it's a critical one about how she can have peace at work and try to make sure that her family has a good income, but knows that her children are well taken care of. And she needed after-school programs, and thanks to increased funding in the President's budget, she now has a place for at least one of her children to go after school.

I met a woman whose daughter was in a very serious automobile accident last spring. And if it were not for the Family and Medical Leave Act, she doesn't know what she would have

done. She was able to take 12 weeks of unpaid leave and have a job waiting when she went back. Imagine how you would feel: you're a working mom, your child's in an accident, that child needs to be in a hospital then needs rehabilitation and physical therapy, and you have to make a choice between taking care of your child or losing your job. This mom understood clearly how important the Family and Medical Leave Act is, and I would like to see its provisions -- which, remember, are unpaid leave -- extended to even more employers so that more employees would have a right to do that.

So just there in that one encounter, child care, after-school care, family and medical leave. Those were not abstract issues to the women I spoke with. They were the stuff of real life. And because of politics each of them had better options than they ever could have had before.

And we are also confronting some very big issues when it comes to Social Security and Medicare. And again, these are not just concerns for a certain group of Americans but should be concerns for all of us. If we have older parents, as I am still fortunate to have my mother, we know that Social Security and Medicare are essential. But we sometimes forget that Social Security is also available to young people who suffer diseases or accidents and can't go on working.

I remember hearing about one young man who had an incapacitating stroke in his early 30s -- something we don't imagine happening to young people. His health problems left his wife and his children to fend for themselves. But because of Social Security he was able to have disability insurance for the children and he knew that they at least would have some measure of financial security.

It truly is a family protection system for America's families. It's also the single reason why half of all American women over 65 are not living in poverty. That is a stunning statistic, and I've taken in my own mind -- as I travel around or go to church or go visit people or look out the window of a car as I drive by -- I'm thinking to myself that for every woman, every two women over 65 whom I see on the street, one of them would be impoverished were it not for Social Security. So this debate about Social Security that is going on in the Congress, and I hope throughout the country, is important for every American, but it is especially important for women and it has special meaning for those millions of Americans who depend upon SSI and other benefits that we often don't think of and we just say Social Security.

It's also critical that we look at what to do to save Medicare. And this is also a problem not just for older Americans but for those of us who have older relatives or feel responsible for someone over 65. I don't know how many friends of yours have had to quit a job or cut back on hours or go to extraordinary lengths to take care of an older relative or friend or in some way make a contribution to the well-being of somebody over 65, but I've met countless Americans who are in that position.

A few weeks ago in the White House, we had a woman whose mother is in a very advanced state of Alzheimers. They couldn't afford to put her in a home, and they really didn't want to. So she quit her job so she could become the full-time caretaker. That meant that her husband had to take on more work to try to maintain their standard of living. You know, one of the hopes that we have in this session of Congress is that the President's proposal to help families with long-term care will be successful. Because especially when families are trying to do the right thing -- keep somebody at home, make the sacrifices -- let's give them the support that they need so that they can continue doing what they know is right for themselves and their families.

There are many examples of where political decisions have made a difference in the lives of real Americans. And this decision that we are confronting about Social Security and Medicare will be one of the most important we face. I happen to think that the President's proposal to dedicate the surplus, 77 percent of it to Social Security and Medicare, is the responsible action to take.

I told a group earlier today that a friend of mine had a great line. She said, "You know, if Roosevelt's line was that 'This is a generation that has a rendezvous with destiny,' ours is a generation which has a rendezvous with responsibility." And that means that for all of these issues, if we don't confront them and try to deal with them now, they will only get worse. And as those of us in the so-called "baby boom generation" age, the choices we face will be incredibly draconian. And people like you and me, most of us in this room, we can probably figure out a way to take care of ourselves, but do we really want to live in a society where the vast majority of Americans are rendered insecure, where their health care is up to the choice of whatever insurance company gets their business? I think not.

I think part of what we have to face is how we in this time of dynamic change have enough security and confidence in the future that we are able to encourage every American to live up to his or her God-given potential. As we look at the future, one of the efforts we are trying to make in the White House to help frame our thinking is through the Millennium Council that we've set up. We've adopted a slogan -- "Honor the past and imagine the future." And if one thinks about it, that's a pretty good idea that we can bring not only to saving America's treasures or thinking about the great accomplishments of the past and what might happen in the future, but it's a pretty good definition for citizens of any democracy.

We honor the past when we recognize the sacrifices that went before us. We honor the past when we recognize that my mother was born before she could vote. We honor the past when we say to ourselves that this country, for all of its difficulties, has gone further in giving to every person who is a part of the American experience an opportunity to be whatever that person has the guts and the hard work and the willingness to make of himself or herself. So we can honor the past in lots of ways. But we do a disservice to ourselves, our children, and our future if we think we can live in the past.

There are many people who believe they can turn the clock back, shut our borders, tell people how to live, point fingers at one another, instead of extending a helping hand and saying, "I will help you on your journey if you help me on mine." And what we as Americans have to recognize is that we cannot drop out of the political process and leave the arena to those with very specific agendas. We cannot say, "I won't be involved in politics because I don't like the negativity, I don't like all of the ads on television, I don't feel comfortable thinking about or talking about politics and the way it has become."

I can certainly understand why someone might feel that way, but it is not a feeling that you should act on. It is a feeling that should be tangent. You could say all you want about the flaws of our political system, but when it comes right down to it, somebody is going to make the decisions. Will we or will we not fund the \$100,000 to bring down class size? Will we or will we not build the schools and repair them that our children need? Will we or will we not pass a patient's bill of rights? Will we or will we not be fiscally responsible with the surplus and begin to deal with Social Security, Medicare, and our savings deficit through USA accounts?

Those are not decisions that we should leave to someone else, some other organized group. Those are decisions each of us have a stake in. And so I begin to think about the future in political terms because I've always believed that we are at our best as a nation when everybody understands their obligations as a citizen. And that is what you are doing here today.

I've had a lot of wonderful experiences in the last six years. I've been able to travel around the world representing our country, both with my husband and on my own. I've looked into the faces of countless people here and abroad, I've listened to their stories, I've shared their hopes and their anguish -- from everything that might happen in their families here in the United States to the political dilemmas they face abroad. And every time I do go out, either to another country or to another part of our country, I am struck time and time again by how blessed we are at this point in our history.

The women at Seneca Falls could never even have imagined the freedoms and the rights we take for granted. The real challenge for us is to decide whether all the sacrifices that were made in the past should just be honored by rhetoric or honored by action. And whether we can be part of imagining a kind of future for our country that keeps faith with all the people who went before. This is a great, great time to be a woman in America. We are so blessed and we should be so grateful, no matter what our personal circumstances are, that we live at a time in a society where we do have the opportunities that we have before us today.

But among our obligations and among the debts we owe to those who came before are to be involved in the political process that makes the American democracy work. And I want to thank all of you for being part of making that happen. Thank you very much.

United Nations International Women's Day

Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
New York, NY
March 4, 1999

Thank you so much, Agnes, and thank you all who are part of the Group on Equal Rights for Women in the UN for hosting this gathering. I was very pleased to be invited to participate today, and it is a great honor for me to return to the United Nations. I am especially pleased that I could be present to hear the Secretary General's speech this morning -- a combination of inspiration and education and down-to-earth practical advice. I think we would expect no less from this remarkable Secretary General. And I am very grateful for his leadership during these times.

Last year, we were honored to have the Secretary General join the President and me at the White House to mark International Women's Day, and at that time the Secretary General said the following: "Women's rights are not something to be given or taken away by government like a subsidy... the oppression of women, from discrimination to death, is the oppression of humanity." There could not be a more eloquent, brief, to-the-point statement about the issue that we are confronting today. And as we gather once again for this special international tribute to women's accomplishments around the world, we are, I am, and countless millions of men and women who never will perhaps even know his name, are grateful that the Secretary General stands with us -- as he stands every day -- as a true champion of women's rights and human rights.

As some of you may recall, and as I am delighted to remember, I had the privilege of addressing the United Nations a little over a year ago on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That was a special moment for me because I was able to quote Eleanor Roosevelt, one of my favorite predecessors, someone whom I have been accused of talking with from time to time. And I can only suggest that if more people talked with her from time to time, the world would be a better place, I believe. She devoted her life to human rights and, particularly in our country, to civil rights. And she understood very well how the declaration would create a new international standard against which we would all be measured. But I particularly appreciate her reminding us, as she did, that human rights began "in small places, close to home, so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world." It is in those small places -- homes, schools, health clinics, markets -- that women are lifting up their lives and the lives of their families.

And the Secretary General rightly reminded us that perhaps it all begins in the smallest of

all places -- in our hearts and our minds, who we are as women, as human beings, our relationships, our connections with one another. They may never appear on any globe or map of the world, but they truly do map the extent of our capacity to live with each other, and to lift up one another, and to make good on the promise of the United Nations.

We are pleased to celebrate today that more women and girls are learning to read and write and, often for the first time, nations and families are investing in girls' education. We're also pleased that women are living longer and healthier lives and that more of us are surviving childbirth as we gain greater access to health care and reproductive services. We also see throughout the world that women are discovering a new level of economic independence. They're contributing more to their families and communities. They're gaining access to credit and jobs that can give them a decent standing of living. And we know and we heard, as the names were recited by the Secretary General, that from the United Nations to the United States to places throughout the world, more women are holding positions of power and authority.

So it is remarkable what has been accomplished over the long span of the last century and even within the last year. I am pleased that the government of Yemen waived its tuition fees for elementary school girls in order to encourage families to send them to school. Turkey passed the Family Protection Law making spousal abuse a crime. The nations of Cote D'Ivoire and Togo passed statutes that banned the practice of female genital mutilation, and only a month ago, the government of Senegal banned the practice as well. Women of Nigeria -- who have struggled 39 years for this moment -- are celebrating the overturning of a traditional practice that denied widows inheritance rights. And for the first time, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia prosecuted the aiding and abetting of rape as a war crime.

Now much of that progress, and there could be many other examples, has been sparked by the United Nation's longstanding commitment to bringing women together in international forums to talk about common challenges, and to forge a common future. And I know that the delegations and the NGOs represented here are meeting now as participants in the UN Commission on the Status of Women.

Just think that it wasn't until Nairobi, which was not very long ago, that domestic violence was finally recognized as a crime, and not a cultural tradition. It wasn't until the UN Conference in Cairo that the world agreed that population and economic development issues must go hand in hand, and that women must be at the heart of our efforts for development.

And it wasn't until women gathered together in Beijing that we said to the world -- once and for all -- that women's rights are human rights, and human rights are women's rights.

These UN conferences have encouraged the flowering of ideas and all kinds of possibilities where none had been dreamed of before. Non-governmental organizations and advocacy groups have been encouraged to do the important work -- at the grassroots level -- of helping women change their lives. And governments have made new commitments thanks to the

United Nations' conferences. I'm especially pleased that UNIFEM has encouraged the investments in women's education and leadership training and microcredit loans that are beginning to transform lives everywhere. In looking at the work of UNIFEM, I can find so many examples from around the world. A woman in Somalia, where the war has displaced so many families and resulted in great human suffering, was trained by UNIFEM in conflict resolution and now encourages other women to help bring peace to that troubled land. A woman in India who was the only daughter in her family when her father died, lost everything. Her uncle took the house, her in-laws were evicted, and she lost her older son. But through UNIFEM she learned about her legal rights and now she has her house and her son back again, and most importantly, she has her dignity. And I'm told she is even running for elected office in her community.

Women have been on the front lines in the battle for human rights and individual dignity for a very long time. But we are finally hearing their voices. Through an effort called Vital Voices, a public/private partnership started by the American government to support women and democracy, I've had the privilege of hearing many of those voices around the world. Sometimes they are raised in song, as we heard earlier from our singers, sometimes they're barely a whisper; sometimes you hear them in a cry of anguish, or maybe a burst of laughter. But throughout the world, I've heard those vital voices.

In Romania and Russia, I've heard the voices of women struggling to recreate a civil society where they had only known authoritarian rule and there had been no tradition of democracy. They are attempting to be sure that their voices are heard and their contributions recognized. In Northern Ireland, I've heard the voices of Catholic and Protestant women who've never been in the same room together before, but who now sit down and talk about what they have in common and how they can work across sectarian lines. In Guatemala and El Salvador, I sat with women who'd been on opposite sides of the civil wars that have only recently ended there. I remember listening to one woman who had been a guerilla leader, sitting next to the sister of the president of the country, and they both talked about how they would have never known of one another if they had not been brought together to recognize that they did indeed share common goals -- not only a common humanity but as women -- a commitment to a better, more peaceful future.

Many women around the world are finding their voice in new ways. And as we stand here together we have to do all that we can to make sure that those voices are amplified, their stories are heard and told. I appreciated the Secretary General sharing some stories from his own experience. Because sometimes stories make the point much better, don't they, than all the statistics and all of the talking that we can engage in at great forums. One single story can pierce through and make it clear that we are all in the same story, we all face the same challenges: What lessons will we bring from this 20th century into the 21st? How will we honor the past? But look at it with very open eyes, recognizing the tragedy, the violence, the horror that has beset this century, but also appreciating the advances, the scientific discoveries, the new ways that women and men have been able to create new lives and opportunities.

One of the most powerful lessons we have learned from experience and history, and confirmed at Nairobi and Cairo and Beijing, is that a nation's progress depends not only on protecting women's fundamental human rights, but on ensuring that those women have access to what we call the tools of opportunity.

No nation, with all respect, can expect to succeed in the global economy of the 21st century if half of its people lack the opportunity and the right to make the most of their God-given potential. Now that does not mean that there is only one way that that potential can be realized. There are as many different life paths for women as there are for men. In fact, I would argue, perhaps even more because of our obligations and desires to have and raise children, our commitment to relationships both close at home and further outside our families. But what we must strive for is to create the conditions in which women have the right to make the choices in their lives for themselves. And some women may choose very traditional paths -- and we should respect that and support it -- but other women may wish to do something totally unprecedented in their family and their culture and we should be willing to support that as well. Responsible choices deserve the kind of responsible support that families and societies should be working to offer as we move into this new century. No nation can hope to move forward if its women and children are trapped in endless cycles of poverty; when they don't have the health care they need; when too many of them still die in childbirth; when they cannot read or take a job for which they will receive equal pay for equal work.

Without these basic rights and opportunities, women will continue to suffer. But that is only half the story because their suffering will also drag down their families and their societies as well.

We know that through the recent experience of the global financial crisis that many countries have faced some very difficult decisions. Many women have been the first to be fired, have lost their jobs, lost their middle-class standing, lost their opportunity to try to progress beyond their own parents. We know that in countries embroiled in armed conflicts, women and children make up the vast surge of humanity fleeing the violence as refugees. And often their suffering is compounded when they are used as weapons of war.

We can point to many problems around our world today where women -- for reasons of history, culture, discrimination, prejudice -- are used to lift up patriarchy, are used really as objects in order for others to exercise power. There probably is no more egregious and systematic trampling of fundamental rights of women today than what is happening in Afghanistan under the iron rule of the Taliban.

Just stop for a minute and think about how women used to make up almost half of Afghan doctors, and now they are forbidden to practice medicine. They used to be half the teachers; now they are barred from teaching. The girls used to go regularly to school; now the doors of those schools are slammed shut.

And we've heard, all of us, the stories of women being flogged with metal cables because a bit of ankle would be showing. We've heard of women being taken to hospital after hospital and finally dying because no care could be given because there were no women doctors and no male doctor could be permitted to treat the woman. Now that is the most extreme example we can point to, but clearly it is an example that we must carefully examine because it is being justified in the name of culture and tradition. It is, as the Secretary of State, Madeline Albright, often says, "no longer acceptable to say that the abuse and mistreatment of women is cultural -- it should be called what it is: criminal." And it should be addressed by individual leaders in societies and by all of us through the United Nations and other multi-lateral efforts. I am pleased that a campaign started here in the United States is aimed at improving educational opportunities for Afghan girls, primarily in refugee camps outside the borders of that country.

I also believe that we have to take a much stronger stand against the trafficking of women and girls, which is another international human rights violation that will continue to haunt us into the 21st century if we do not act now. An estimated one to two million women and girls -- the numbers are hard to find as you might guess -- are trafficked every year around the world, forced into labor, domestic servitude, or sexual exploitation. Women sold as domestics and slaves in illegal sweatshops are sometimes literally worked to death, and women and children trafficked into the sex industry are often exposed to deadly diseases such as HIV and AIDS.

I have spoken to young girls in northern Thailand whose parents were persuaded to sell them as prostitutes, and they received a great deal of money by their standards. You could often tell the home of where girls had been sold because they might even have a satellite dish or an addition built onto the house. But I met the girls who had come home after they had been used up, after they had contracted HIV and AIDS. If you've ever held the hand of a 13-year-old girl dying of AIDS, you can understand how critical it is that we take every step possible to prevent this happening to any other girl anywhere in the world. I also, in the Ukraine, heard of women who told me with tears running down their faces that young women in their communities were disappearing. They answered ads that promised a much better future in another place and they were never heard from again.

This is an international criminal activity, with traffickers operating boldly across international borders. But we are finally as a world beginning to address it.

Next week in Vienna, the United Nations will be negotiating a protocol on trafficking in women and children as part of the Organized Crime Convention, and all of us have a stake in making sure that this new instrument of international cooperation will set standards for our efforts to prevent trafficking, punish traffickers and protect victims, and strengthen the global fight to end this pervasive human rights violation and transnational criminal problem. The United States government is working closely with the governments of Italy, Israel, Finland and the Ukraine on this critical issue -- and I invite other countries to join as well.

Another powerful lesson we will take with us into the next century is that for women to

advance, democracy must advance as well. The rights that we hold precious as human beings -- freedom of conscience, religion, association -- can only be protected and expanded if there is a civil society, if there is a democracy in which those rights are embedded.

And we know that democracy means more than elections -- as important as they are. We have to be willing to support institutions such as labor unions, non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, a free press, that will help make sure that the results of elections actually bring about fair legal systems, independent judiciaries, and that basic rights and freedoms are once again -- if they ever had been -- implemented.

I think that the kind of work that the United Nations has done on issues from domestic violence to population to development will continue, and in many ways gain greater support, in the years to come. Because after all, as we have learned the lessons about what importance we must place on the role of women, we know that we must continue to speak out on our own and to hear the voices of others. I will try as I travel to listen to those voices and amplify them.

I'm delighted that in a few weeks I will be privileged to travel to Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco, to see firsthand the progress that women are making in that region of the world, and to better understand the challenges they continue to face. I am very much looking forward to that trip because I know that in those countries as in all others I have visited I will be inspired by and educated by and really transformed by the stories that I hear.

I was also pleased that last June, during the President's trip to China, we were able to announce that the United States would sponsor a series of exchange programs to bring Chinese women together with their counterparts here in the United States. And I am very pleased that the first delegation has just arrived -- a diverse group that includes a woman who runs a cable station, another who runs a women's hotline, and a remarkable lawyer I met who is the head of a women's law clinic in Beijing.

There are stories and individuals like that everywhere, and I was pleased that with the strong support of the United States Information Agency, the President's budget will include funding to continue this China/American exchange into the coming year.

You know, it was in preparation for the trip to China that I first heard that wonderful saying that, "Women hold up half the sky." It's a powerful image of what women do every single day, in every country, as we struggle to raise families, pass on our values, and participate fully in the life of our communities.

That saying, in different forms, is found in the culture of our own Native Americans and in many other cultures around the world. It really describes not only the reality, but the hope as well. So as we move toward this 21st century, let us acknowledge that women cannot hold up half the sky if they are robbed of the education they deserve to have and denied the right to go to school. They cannot hold up half the sky if they don't have access to the credit, the loans, and

the jobs they need to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. They cannot hold up half the sky if they are victims of abuse in their own homes, or kidnaped and become objects of war or sold into marriage, slavery or other disastrous life circumstances. Women cannot hold up half the sky if they are denied the freedom to plan their own families, if they are denied their basic legal rights. Women can only hold up half the sky -- as this wonderful, wonderful sculptress suggests to us -- if their feet are planted firmly on the soil of freedom and equal justice.

My hope is that into the next century we will not only continue to see progress, but advancements in every part of the world. We will see a world in which all citizens -- men and women -- enjoy the freedoms of liberty; in which all children are valued and given equal opportunities whether they are boys or girls; and in which every citizen can live in dignity, free from fear, and filled with hope. Only then will we be able to say -- with honesty -- that yes, women not only can but do hold up half the sky. And that sky over all of us is filled with a bright future for our boys and, especially, our girls.

Thank you very much.

Women's Equality Summit at the National Education Association

**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Washington, D.C.
March 15, 1999**

Thank you so much. I am delighted to be here in front of all of you. As I look around this room I see so much energy and commitment and leadership, and it is a very exciting sight to behold. I want to thank Laura not just for that introduction, but for the work she does every day on behalf of issues that affect women and men, that affect people who deserve to have their voices heard to make sure that how they live and the needs of their lives are taken into account in our political system. And what Laura and her organization have done over the last 20 or so years now is to help give low-income women the tools they need to become their own best advocates. That is really our goal here -- to see how we can continue to work together to empower women to make decisions that are best for them and their lives.

And there are many people who we have to thank in this gathering: Susan Bianchi-Sand, I want to thank you for your hard work and your leadership; Ellie Smeal and Pat Reuss, for their tireless work in organizing this Women's Equality Summit. And we are grateful to the NEA, Bob Chase, and the entire leadership for letting us meet in this beautiful auditorium.

It is very fitting that we would be gathered here at the end of this century that has seen so many changes in women's lives. I'm just marveled when I think back about what women's lives were like at the beginning of this century. We couldn't vote. We were likely to die in childbirth or earlier from an infectious disease or some other kind of ailment. We were not permitted to hold many professional positions or jobs that were available to men. We were not given the full range of educational opportunities that we now take for granted.

Although the laws were slowly changing, they had not changed enough. So women were, in many respects, living in the worst of both worlds when it came to work because the women who did work outside the home worked very, very hard. There is a great myth about women only having begun working recently, and until that African American women who...**(inaudible)**.

There are many changes that we can all be grateful for, and we can thank those who came before us. I was privileged to speak in Seneca Falls for the 150th anniversary of the Declaration of Sentiments. And when you think about the work that those women did -- knowing that they probably would not see the fruits in their lifetime, that they were advocating for such radical changes: the right to vote, to inherit property, to be able to be the custodian of one's children in the event of divorce -- the things that we now can look back and thank them for.

But they were doing it not for themselves, but for the next generation and generations of women and men to come. Because these issues that we are talking about -- which we will be addressing in this next year and particularly in this Congress -- which have brought us together in this gathering today, they do have a disproportionate effect on women. But I want to make it very clear that these are human issues. And I say that because there is a recent trend in political commentary claiming that talking about child care or after-school care or the impoverishment of women on Social Security -- that addressing those issues somehow leads to the feminization of politics. Now I'm not against that, but I think it is fairer to say that we are attempting to bring about the humanization of politics.

Now you will hear from three women in a minute who have a lot of expertise and who will address specifically some of the issues that I'm going to just touch on. And they are three women whom I admire and call my friends: Secretary of Health and Human Services -- the longest serving secretary -- Secretary Shalala; and of course, those who follow what happens in Washington, we know also a crimebuster. The Secretary of Labor who has done a superb job in bringing to the table issues that affect pay equity and workers' rights and safety and occupational health -- a woman who served a great position in recent Democratic administrations, but particularly in the White House during the first term of the President and then as the Secretary of Labor, Alexis Herman. And Barbara Kennelly -- I don't know if there is anyone here who is lucky enough to be represented in Connecticut by Congresswoman Kennelly, but for our first contingent, I'm sure it's represented here. But Barbara Kennelly served for years on the Ways and Means Committee, and while there she was a very strong advocate for fairness in government programs, particularly Social Security. And I'm delighted that she has been asked and that she has accepted the very important position in these times to be counselor to the Social Security Administration. So we're delighted to have her expertise here today.

I believe that some of you participated in the 1997 Women's Economic Leadership Summit in the White House, and today those of you who were there and those of you who have come to this meeting are building on the blueprint that many of you laid out at that important gathering. And the participants that are here represented by the National Council of Women's Organizations have a special responsibility because you are really standing in for congresswomen who couldn't be here -- certainly women whom you may know, whom you work with, who are in organizations that are part of your advocacy network -- but you're also standing in for women who will never know your name, will never know the name of your organization, will probably not know much about the debate that's going on here because they are struggling vitally to keep body and soul together. You know, they're getting up, getting kids off to school, getting to clock in on time, getting to the office on time, trying to figure out what happens when their child care arrangements fall apart, struggling to be paid equitably for the work that they do. They are there on the job, building America and taking care of the next generation of Americans, but they are not fully participating in the political process and they therefore -- as we always have in America -- are going to rely on people who understand them, empathize with them, and can represent them as you do so well. So this is an important gathering for those who are here, but it may even be more important for those who are not here, because many of the issues that we are talking about

here today are ones that hold special meaning for people who are really struggling, who are trying to make sure that they have their shot at the American dream in the years to come. And the decisions that are made in Washington will, in very large measure, impact on how well they are able to do.

You know, sometimes I am a little bit taken aback and even bewildered when I hear people talking about politics as though it were the problem of somebody else, somewhere -- when we know that it is grassroots activism, it is citizen participation, it is the voices of all of us that have to rise in a crescendo of chorus to be heard by people who make decisions, that really has always made America move forward. If politically elected leaders were left to themselves, we wouldn't have suffrage, we wouldn't have a lot of the changes that happened at the end of this last century and the beginning of this next. Those were not ideas that flowed from the very closely held power of elected office; those were ideas that came from the grassroots by people just like us. And it is because of that that it is critical that we once again re-energize the women of America and the men to understand what it will take to move into this next century with the kind of confidence and energy that we should have. Because just think about the relative handful of women and their male allies, at the end of the last century, who made so many of the reforms possible that we have come to take for granted.

I recently read the galley of a new biography of the early years of Jane Addams. She forged a new pattern, along with other women who were like-minded, who fought and struggled and advocated for legislation that would get children out of factories, give women a decent shot at a 40-hour week, not a 60- or a 70-hour week. They cleaned up the slums of Chicago or New York or a lot of our other cities where immigrants were just herded in and tried to be kept in their places. So there was a lot of work -- important work -- that was led by, that was given voice by women at the end of this last century.

I think we have just the kind of opportunity to do that again now. Because look at the situation we're in. We have a lot of blessings to be grateful for right now in our country. I'm very pleased that we have the kind of economic recovery that has made it possible to create many new jobs. I am pleased at how we are beginning to see the fruits of those economic changes really spread into the lives of people who are left out or marginalized. I'm delighted by what I hear about the expansion of health care to children that was passed through the balanced budget. I rejoice in the declining of crime throughout our country because we adopted new strategies and people work together at the community level. So we have a lot to be grateful for, but that is not just a time to rest on our laurels, that is a time to say, "Well, what do we do with those blessings? How do we make sure that they are truly, really, once and for all embedded in the bedrock of our society, and then made clear that they are available to everyone?"

Well, there are some particular issues that we have to be addressing right now, and we finally have the tools and the resources -- if we can summon the political will -- to address. Now what are some of those issues? Well, clearly, the debate about the Social Security system is going to be one that will have profound effects on how we live into the next century. Social

Security was, first and foremost, not a legislative program, not an economic decision; it was a statement of values. How will we treat people as they age? How will we take care of them in their later years? What kind of society will we be if we turn our backs on our mothers and fathers and our grandmothers and our grandfathers?

So we took that value statement and put into effect a program. The Social Security program is our nation's solemn pledge that Americans can and will grow older with dignity. It's a commitment that our parents and our grandparents have been able to rely upon. But it is not just a retirement program, and this is a particular point that I wish to stress today -- almost one-third of the beneficiaries of the Social Security system are not retirees, but they are severely disabled workers, they're children, survivors of workers who've died in an untimely manner, including millions and millions of young people.

So in a very real sense that statement of values should be expanded beyond what we usually say -- namely, that it is a pledge to our older citizens -- to really be seen as a pledge that there will be a family protection system to guard against what a wonderful man some of you may have known and worked with, Arthur Fleming, used to say, "to guard against the hazards and vicissitudes of life." And whenever I would hear Arthur say that in his inimitable manner as he stood on the front lines of social justice for 90 plus years before his death a few years ago, I used to think about how, as you're younger, you don't think about hazards and vicissitudes often; as you get older you think more about hazards and vicissitudes. And there are so many young people who have been protected by and who could benefit in the event of a tragedy or catastrophe, that may not even know that.

One of the messages that I would like to see us get out through our grassroots efforts is that this Social Security system, this family protection system, is just as important to someone in their 20s as someone in their 80s. There are many of you, as I look out, who are more in the category of 20s than 80s, and you and your friends may not know what the Social Security system means to you. I've heard many stories about young people who have suffered serious accidents, or the death of a parent, who have been able to go onto college, been able to have a decent standard of living because of the Social Security system. Just today I met a woman from Silver Spring, Maryland. Ruth is a widow whose husband died when she was only 39 years old -- something she certainly never expected -- leaving her with two small children to raise. She now receives her own retirement benefits as well as a portion of widow's benefits. She's been able to send both of her children through college.

I met a young man, just 31, who had a debilitating stroke -- something he never could have dreamed of. And thanks to Social Security, he was able to piece together enough resources to keep his family in their home and to keep living as they had lived pretty much before the stroke.

Now I would imagine that there are many such stories in this room, and those stories should be told. Because it is really by stories that we identify more and learn more about what it

is that we are trying to save or promote or protect. Just saying Social Security may not ring a bell; talking about an elderly relative or a young friend who has had a disaster, by whom we can then make Social Security seem alive, is a much clearer way to make the point.

There is another way which Social Security is a family protection, and that is that were it not for Social Security, half of all American women over 65 would be poor. Now think about that. And what I've tried to do is -- as I travel around or even sometimes as I look out the window of the car I'm in -- I look at women and I think to myself every time I see a woman over 65, and then another one, that one of those two, were it not for Social Security, would be impoverished. That's a stunning statistic. And it means -- as I know it would mean in your life -- that were it not for Social Security, many of us would be supporting our parents. We would take them in, we would do what we needed to do to try to provide the resources they required to stay above poverty, to live as comfortably as we could afford. And that would cause a lot of difficult decisions in our lives, wouldn't it? There would be many families who would have to choose between supporting a parent -- an elderly parent -- and sending a child to college.

It becomes even more pronounced if we add Medicare into that equation, because most families already try to do everything we can emotionally and financially to support an older relative in whatever way is necessary. And particularly when it comes to health care we would certainly do all we could to make sure that a mother or a father or a grandparent had the health care that was needed. And that would mean an economic responsibility and an economic burden that we would feel required to shoulder.

So in a very real sense, Medicare and Social Security say to our older people: We're going to help you remain independent, and by helping to support you because of what you've done for our country -- the families you've raised, the jobs you've held, the incomes that you've contributed to the United States, the wars you've fought -- we're going to help, as a nation, to support you. And by doing so, we're going to free up the resources that might otherwise have to come directly to you from your family, so that they can do what you did -- raise the next generation, send their children to college, hold down the jobs that enable them to move forward.

So this is in a very real way, a totally interdependent system. And it needs to be seen in that way, because once it is seen in that way, then the debate about Social Security is not some abstract discussion that affects older people, the debate about Medicare is not somebody else's health care needs; it is how we all take care of each other and how we each fulfill our obligations to both the younger and the older generation.

And when the President proposed in the State of the Union that he wanted to set aside a large portion of the budget surplus to preserve and strengthen Social Security well into the 21st century, it was a way of saying, "Let's take this money that we have been able to save because of budget decisions -- tough budget decisions that were made earlier in this Administration -- and let's use it to start solving a problem that if we solve now, will be easier and less expensive to address, and if we wait, will become more difficult and more costly to address." That 62 percent

figure that the President said would be necessary to take from the surplus and use for Social Security would go a long way towards strengthening the system.

With respect to Medicare, he proposed 15 percent of the surplus to help expand and extend the life of Medicare. And that too is a way of saying to older Americans, "We want to ensure that your health needs are met." Because, after all, if we are able to expand and extend Medicare, we will be providing health care to older Americans who are the most expensive people in the system -- which is just a natural cause of aging -- but for whom the provision of Medicare is getting increasingly more cost-effective. Thanks to HHS under Donna Shalala's leadership, we are beginning to really see tremendous progress in getting the fraud and the abuse and the waste out of the Medicare system. But we already have a very low administrative cost in Medicare. So a dollar in Medicare actually goes further in providing real services to patients than a dollar in private insurance where money has to go to overhead, profit, and things like that. So Medicare -- if it is handled correctly -- can be there well into the future for all of us.

Now that is not the place to stop, however -- although that will be probably the most contentious and difficult of the debates we face as we close out this century. But I see it is a continuum of the work that Jane Adams and others started a hundred years ago to get to that point where Social Security remains safe and secure, and where Medicare is there for all of us as we reach our older years.

But one of the ways we could make life easier for women and families right now is to do more to close the pay gap between men and women. The AFL-CIO just released a report that highlights the critical importance of equal pay, and makes clear that we all pay a high price when equal pay is denied. According to the study, an average working family loses more than \$4,000 a year because of the wage gap between men and women. Now that not only hurts women, it hurts single mothers, it hurts working couples, it hurts families, and it hurts our nation's economy. And then, in this interdependent web that we are all part of whether we admit it or not, it hurts our Social Security payments. Because if we don't get paid what we're entitled to be paid, then when we retire, our Social Security payment is less than it should be. So all of this is connected with the very fundamental goal of providing economic security to working people and retired people.

The study also found that over half of the two-earner and single mother households across the country now living in poverty would be lifted out of poverty if equal pay policies were enacted and enforced at the state level. Now that is a stunning statistic. Again, let's just put a mental picture in our heads. I have stood at factory gates with people coming to work at five o'clock in the morning with little babies -- and pick-up trucks that had to be then driven somewhere -- until they could be taken to day care or school. I've been in lots of offices where young women and older women are working very, very hard, and I've seen a lot of people who are working hard -- 40 hours a week -- and still below the poverty line. Now that is something that should be unacceptable in America. Everybody who works full time should have a wage that is above the poverty line, and we could get closer to that goal if we enforced equal pay. Now that

is just a simple question of fairness and equity with great economic consequences.

Now there is another piece of this economic security pie, and that is what do we do to make sure that women and men who are raising families have the supports they need so that they're able to do the best job they can at home and at work?

Now just a few weeks ago, I was in Brooklyn at a YMCA where I had a fascinating and moving roundtable with six women. There was a single mom there who has really worked her way up in the corporation where she is employed. She now makes \$30,000 a year -- she gets no child support from the father of her child -- so that is the income that she is using to raise her son and support herself. Now after she pays taxes and rent and utilities and food and all the things we have to pay for, she has no money left to afford child care because she makes too much money to qualify for subsidized care. I see lots of heads nodding. And that is the case of literally millions of women around our country. And so this woman is in a state of constant anxiety as she tries to juggle where to put her son and make sure that her child care arrangements don't fall apart, because she can't afford to lose this job that she has worked so hard to achieve.

Now we need to do better and do more in this country to make sure that every working parent has access to good quality, affordable child care. And I'm pleased that tomorrow there will be the introduction of some pieces of legislation. I believe Representative Ellen Tauscher of California and Representative Ben Cardin of Maryland will be introducing important child care legislation and holding the first child care hearing. Now I hope that these initiatives signal that we are going to get some action on this issue.

We're also fighting to dramatically increase after-school programs so that working families don't have to worry about where their children are in the hours between 3 and 6 p.m., when so many problems arise with kids -- the times when more crimes are committed and more other kinds of difficulties occur.

We're also committed to expanding and extending the Family and Medical Leave Act so that more working families can take time to care for their sick child or aging parent -- and still keep their jobs.

Now this is just part of a broad agenda for working men and women, and for working families, so that we can begin to make good on the promises that the end of this century hold out to us. I am so pleased that I could be standing here in 1999 before this audience of advocates and people who understand what's happening in the lives of Americans, and talking about what we have to be grateful for. But I hope that in the next couple of years we could have a similar meeting where we talk about what we've achieved on the rest of this agenda, so that we will be able to look back and say we have made good on the promise of Social Security and Medicare; we finally have a system of affordable, quality child care and after-school care; we have paid attention to our public schools; we have given our public schools and their teachers the support, the dignity, and the respect they deserve to have to do the most important job.

Now it is never easy, and this is an ambitious agenda. But I am very confident we can achieve these goals. I'm also very sure it will be difficult. But as I look back on this century and I think about the achievements that have really moved us forward as women, as Americans, as human beings, I know that it takes concerted effort. I know that it takes a lot of people making their contributions.

As I read this Jane Addams' biography, I encountered the names of women whom I have not heard of before, women who are critical to doing things like the first garbage inspection tour of a ward in Chicago to force the political leadership to clean the garbage up out of the alleyways and off the street corners; and there was a woman who got into a cart every day and she went around and took notes about where the garbage was. Well, that led to changes in how garbage was collected. It led to public health changes about how we understood what spread disease and what hygiene meant. And so I saw the names of people that may not ever have their own biographies written about them, but who were part of a movement that made a difference in our lives.

Now we're having at the White House a series of Millennium lectures and events under the theme of "Honor the Past -- Imagine the Future." Well, yes, we can and should honor the past. We should especially honor those women and men who were on the forefront of change, often at great cost to themselves. Think of the names that they were called, think of the isolation that they suffered, think of the fingers that were pointed at them because they stood up for women's suffrage or they were the first to try to get a job that others had held before and only men were permitted. Think of all those people and, yes, let us honor the past. But we also have an equal and, I would argue, an even greater obligation to imagine a future where the work of the past and the work of the present combine to create changes that will truly set the stage for the kind of country and world we want to inherit in and live in. Each of you is playing a role in that, and I am grateful and thankful that you are standing in the shoes of those who have come before. And who knows? In a hundred years someone may be standing here, or probably in a virtual room somewhere, talking about some of you and also talking about all of you -- some by name -- but all because you have made a decision to help set us on the right course for the future.

Thank you all for having me.

Senior Executive Women's Forum
Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton
Chicago, Illinois
October 26, 1999

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Copies*

Thank you very much, Susan, and thank you all for being part of this important forum. I cannot see a soul out there, but I am told that Former Governor Thompson is here, and Lieutenant Governor Woods is here, and State Treasurer Topinka is here, as well as some other elected officials. And I am delighted to be able to join so many of you for what has become a very exciting forum.

It really was the brainchild of the two founders—the two Susans. And from what I understand, when they held their first event in 1994, they expected a handful of people, and about 150 showed up. And because of that, they understood that the voices of senior businesswomen and women at high levels of responsibility, and many aspects of the life of Chicago and Illinois, needed to be heard at every level of the political process. So it's a great pleasure for me to be back in Chicago, and to be participating in this forum.

I've had an incredible day already here in Chicago. I just came from the Robie House on the University of Chicago campus—really one of Frank Lloyd Wright's signature Prairie style homes—and we just announced a very generous gift from the Pritzger Family Foundation for the renovation of that home. I was also earlier at another famous address in Chicago—2120 South Michigan Avenue, immortalized by the Rolling Stones—at Chess Records and Studio, with Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, and Koko Taylor, in order to bring attention to this treasure that needs to be preserved. And tomorrow, I will be going to the Pullman Historic Landmark District, which is such an important site for so much of industrial and labor history.

Now one might wonder, what do those sites have in common, and what do they have in common with this conference? Well I see them all as part of the story of this city and country, part of what we are trying to preserve through the Save America's Treasures program. And they remind us, according to the theme that we have adopted for the millennium, to honor the past and imagine the future.

Well that seems not only a fitting theme for art and culture and monuments and skyscrapers, but it also seems a very important and timely theme for the subject of today's forum. If we look at the many women whose contributions helped shape this century, many of them came from right here in Chicago. This was a site for so much that happened that really set the stage for what was to follow and what we celebrate today.

Illinois was the first state east of the Mississippi to give women the right to vote in presidential and municipal elections. We can still hear the words of Bertha Palmer, who in 1883, having finally secured a spot for a woman's building at the World's Columbian Exposition, said, "Even more important than the discovery of Columbus... is the fact that the general government has just discovered women."

We can hear Ida Wells-Barnett insist on walking with the entire Illinois delegation, not just the African American women who attended the 1913 suffrage march in Washington. She said, "Either I go with you or not at all. I am not taking this stand because I personally wish for recognition. I am doing it for the future benefit of my whole race."

And if we listen, we can still hear the voices of the members of the National American Women's Suffrage Association, who gathered, on February 14, 1920, at the nearby Congress Hotel for their last convention. They knew that the 19th amendment would soon be ratified. And so the meeting began with a celebration as they sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" and "There will be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight." According to the minutes, "For three quarters of an hour, horns tooted, and state delegations stood on chairs; they sang, they gave their yells, they formed in groups and marched around the room waving American flags. The Republican elephant and the Democratic donkey marched amicably arm in arm to the platform."

Now imagine what those women, those pioneers, would think if they were here with us today, and they could look around this room and know that women were holding very high positions in corporations, as general counsels, vice-presidents and presidents; that they were holding office, that they were candidates for office; that they had taken the work and the sacrifice of those who came before, and pushed it even further, and by doing so made it possible for women to dream even bigger dreams.

All of us come here with the image in our minds of those who courageously marched for, died for, and quietly worked for the opportunities we take for granted today. Some are famous, like the ones I mentioned. But some are colleagues; some might be mothers and grandmothers, or aunts or sisters. I know that Susan Gallagher's mother—Kathleen Blackner, who is here—is still a public school teacher, which she tells her seven children is a piece of cake after raising all of them. I think of my own mother, born here in Chicago before women got the right to vote, but who has always encouraged me and urged me to go as far as I could.

Now will we be role models for the women and girls who follow us? Well I believe we can be, but I think we have to be very conscious about the lessons we are teaching and the gifts we are giving. And the subject of today's forum about politics requires us to think a little differently, perhaps, than our foremothers ever could have imagined, and to realize that politics is part of how we do anything in a democracy. Politics with a small "p" matters in all of our lives, because as citizens of this democracy each of us has an obligation, not perhaps to hold or run for office, but as a citizen, to be sure that we participate. Jane Addams once said, "Politics is...housekeeping on a grand scale." What she showed every day at Hull House and in her life is that civic involvement is really the lifeblood of democracy. It is how we make decisions, whether or not we get along with one another; how we move closer to our ideals as Americans.

The delegates who gathered at the Congress Hotel in 1920 adopted resolutions on issues ranging from the minimum wage to education, to equal opportunity for women in

politics and business. But it was up to the women who came after, and particularly the women of the last decade, to bring those issues to the top of the political agenda. We know that, and I am sure you heard from the pollsters and others who addressed you earlier, that there is what is called the "gender gap" in elections. And certainly that was apparent in the 1996 presidential election. But we can look at the poll that you released. We can look at many of the issues being debated daily in the media and in Congress. Whether it's health care or education or domestic violence or child care, there are so many issues that are no longer just women's issues, they are issues for the entire body politic. When children don't have a safe place to go after school, when women don't earn equal pay for equal work, those issues affect families and communities.

Now I recall during the 1996 election that there were some political commentators who said that the focus on issues like child care, for example, was leading to what they termed the "feminization of politics." I think they meant it as an insult. But I prefer to believe that what is really going on is the *humanization* of politics. Because what we are talking about is how people actually live their lives, and how we can ensure that politics works.

So when someone asks, "Does it matter whether women are involved in politics," I think of the last six and a half years. It certainly has mattered to women and to families that we have made a lot of progress in our nation, that we have record unemployment, record surpluses, the strongest economy in a generation, and more women-owned businesses than ever before.

It's mattered that crime is down, and that health insurance is being extended to children; that the Family and Medical Leave Act is ensuring that parents won't have to choose between the job they need and the child they love.

But at this time of unprecedented prosperity and opportunity, I think we—men and women—face a fundamental choice: Are we satisfied that the progress we have made is good enough? Are we ready to retreat into our own private sphere and say, "I'm fine, my family's fine, my business is fine; I don't have to worry about anyone else?" Or do we take advantage of this moment to confront the challenges that we all still face?

Because right now at the national, state, and local level, decisions are being made that will determine the quality of our lives into the next century. You know so many of those issues from your own personal experience. Right now, almost two-thirds of women with small children are in the labor force. What happens in Washington, or Chicago, or Springfield determines whether or not millions of low-income families are eligible for child care subsidies, and whether all those parents who need a safe place for their child after school will have one.

We know that never before has a good education been more of a passport to prosperity—or a bad education more of a life-sentence. Chicago has shown how public schools can be turned around. But what will happen to the 5,000 school buildings across America that need to be repaired or replaced? What will happen to the nearly 1.7 million

school children who are now in smaller classes because we passed the initiative to put 100,000 more teachers in the classroom? But those teachers may not be funded for another year, and those students may find themselves back in those same old, overcrowded classrooms.

Right now, decisions are being made that will determine whether we do get violence out of our schools and guns away from our children. And this is especially on our minds in light of what happened this past week—from the bomb the student brought to Downers Grove North High School, to the tragic death of Congressman Bobby Rush's son.

Right now, decisions are being made that will determine whether women will finally receive equal pay for equal work. One of my staff members showed me a cartoon that her mother had sent her that she stuck up on the refrigerator at home. It showed six people sitting around a conference room table—all in suits, all wearing glasses, all men. And one of them announces, "Gentlemen, we must cut our expenses in half, so I'm replacing each of you with a woman."

Now clearly, things are not that bad. As the Council of Economic Advisors report makes clear, the gap between women's and men's wages has narrowed since 1963, when the Equal Pay Act was passed. But women still bring home only about 75 cents for every man's dollar, and we now have some very sophisticated studies about the persistence of wage discrimination at the highest levels of our academic and business world. And we know that that a 25-cent difference isn't much of a comfort when you have to pay for the expenses that keep a family going.

There are some who call the equal pay issue—and I quote—"an imaginary hobgoblin." They say that any wage gap that can't be explained by differences in experience, education and occupation can be made up for—and I quote again—by "the non-monetary benefits of female-dominated jobs, including better supervisors, fewer risks, easier commutes, and more flexible hours."

Well tell that to the women lawyers who on average make \$300 a week less than their male counterparts. Or the women accountants who make \$200 less than their male counterparts. There is no other way to explain it. As the MIT study demonstrated clearly, when you held constant for experience, for tenure, for qualifications of every kind, there were still discrepancies. Wage discrimination exists, and as long as it does, we need to strengthen the enforcement of equal pay laws.

Right now, decisions are being made that will determine whether we pass, and the president signs, a Patient's Bill of Rights for every American; whether we save and strengthen Medicare and Social Security for future generations. Those are two programs that are especially important to women. Nearly a quarter of all elderly women rely on Social Security for their sole source of income. And as women, we live longer than men, have more chronic health problems, relatively smaller pensions, and therefore depend on Medicare even more.

A few months ago, I met a woman named Mary Lee. When her mother got sick, Mary Lee moved her mother in with her, as many of us have or would do. She found that as her mother's health deteriorated, she even had to stop working in order to care for her around the clock. But her mother's Medicare—and her mother's Medicare gap policy—didn't cover the prescription drug costs, which cost \$4,500 a year.

And so, as with so many families, Mary Lee's family had to make some tough choices—whether children's needs or her mother's needs came first. Mary Lee's mother passed away, but the courageous efforts that Mary Lee put forth to care for her are certainly a reminder of what happens in millions and millions of families.

We in this room are often the blessed and fortunate ones in our society. We have been able to take advantage of good educations, we've been given opportunities. And the question is, where will we stand on the issues I've mentioned, and so many others? Will we speak out on behalf of changes that might not directly affect us right away, but certainly indirectly could, and would directly affect so many others? I often think of how fortunate I am that many of the problems that plagued women with economic issues and health issues are ones that I have not experienced, but I know that there but for the grace of God go I and everyone else. Women who don't have any position from which to speak—women who don't have a voice that will be heard—need our voices. Politics is about organizing and raising those voices here at home and around the world.

I've been privileged to represent our country in many different settings in the last six and a half years. And I have seen firsthand the struggles that women face around the globe. It often puts into stark perspective our own situation. I've been in villages in Africa and small huts in Asia and health clinics in Latin America, and I've listened to countless women talk to me about their lives. I think it's a good reminder for those of us as to what it's like for the majority of women still living in the world, who often put in very long hours—getting up before the sun to gather firewood, to milk a goat, or even, as I saw in Mongolia, a horse; to prepare the food that often takes hours; to do the planting and the harvesting; to go to the market; to be employed by or run the small businesses that are the backbones of most developing countries' economies—and who still, with all of their effort, often find themselves ignored, marginalized within their families and their communities.

We started an initiative called Vital Voices, and we have taken that initiative throughout the world so that we could give a platform to women's voices, and by doing so, try to help women become political. We started in Austria with women from the former Soviet Union. And we listened to how women who once held positions are finding themselves unemployed, and are seeing their economies not moving forward, and in many instances, are finding that they are now not so sought after because the jobs are scarcer, and men are the ones who often receive them.

We moved on to Latin America where we had a hemispheric conference in Uruguay, where woman after woman talked about what it meant to no longer be living

under totalitarian military dictatorships—every country in our hemisphere, save one, is now a democracy. Many of those women had stood on the front lines as they saw loved ones disappear, as they saw democracy return after very difficult battles, and they were determined to take their rightful place in every sector of society. I attended a joint meeting of all the women in the legislature in Uruguay—of every political stripe, from the far right to the far left—who had banded together to make sure women's voices were heard.

And in El Salvador, I sat down with women who were on opposite sides of that bloody struggle. One woman had been a guerilla leader, the other was a member of a very prominent family that had been on the other side. And they talked about how, as women, they were able to make concessions that their male colleagues found very difficult, to try to make those tentative steps toward building trust with one another.

In Belfast, Northern Ireland, we convened a Vital Voices conference and brought together women from the north who had never ever sat down and talked with one another—women from different traditions who found they had more in common and could make common cause in the political system. Women have been elected to the assembly in Northern Ireland, and we are all hopeful that the peace process takes hold and moves forward. But on the ground, in the small “p” political arena, women are knitting communities together, crossing sectarian lines, creating small businesses, building playgrounds in areas where children have never felt safe to play outdoors.

And then just a few weeks ago, I was in Iceland, where women from Russia and the Baltics came together with women from Scandinavia and America to talk about democracy. And there are so many challenges facing the women of Russia, yet they were there, bravely looking for ways that they can help themselves, their businesses, their communities, become political participants in a very difficult environment. We also had women from other parts of the world come to speak. Rasha, from Kuwait, spoke about how finally after years of struggle, the Emir had said that women would be permitted to vote, but the Parliament has yet to act on that decree. The parliamentary leaders keep saying to women who have never been allowed to vote, “What is the urgency?” And Rasha said she had been stunned by the question. These were women who had stood shoulder to shoulder during the Iraqi invasion. They had undertaken very difficult, and sometimes even dangerous, missions, and they are still being told to wait.

A woman from Belarus—Vera, a lawyer who stands up for human rights in a country that is reverting to communism and totalitarian authoritarianism—spoke movingly about what it's like to try to be a lawyer who speaks for human rights when your colleagues disappear, when you're disbarred, when newspapers are shut down.

I mention these examples to remind us that we have so many more blessings, not just in comparison to the women who met at the Congress Hotel, or the women who helped Jane Addams with projects she undertook at Hull House, or the women at Seneca Falls in 1848 who published their Declaration of Sentiments on behalf of women. We are so blessed in comparison to women who live in most of the rest of the world right now.

And as with any blessing, it carries an obligation. What will we do to make sure our voices are heard? We have the blessings we enjoy today, not because some benevolent ruler gave them to us, but because we worked for them, we advocated for them, we struggled for them, and yes, we voted for them.

We have an extraordinary moment in history as we end this 20th century. We can decide to honor the past and imagine and build a better future, or we can allow the complacency that often sets in when times are good to dull our senses and close our eyes to the work that is yet to be done. If we want to honor the past, then we have to be part of imagining and making that future.

When I think about politics in 1999, I know that so often it is more about 30-second commercials than about substance; I know that women still have some obstacles to overcome; and I know that it's often talked about these days as though it were some entertainment or sporting event that we could all be spectators at and turn it off if we found it distasteful or boring. But I have seen in so many ways what a difference it makes.

And so I come today to urge that you leave this forum committed to the political process; that you use your talents and opportunities to become involved in an issue—in a campaign, as a candidate—to advocate on behalf of what you believe in, and not to be deterred by the often uncomfortable, and even painful and mean-spirited atmosphere that sometimes marks our politics.

We've seen an increasing reluctance of people to vote. One of my favorite posters from 1996 was of a woman with a piece of tape covering her mouth. And under it, it said: "Most politicians think women should be seen and not heard. In the last election, 54 million women agreed with them."

So the bottom line, the most fundamental obligation, is to vote. It's surprising how many people of affluence and standing tell me that they have given up on the political process; they don't think there is any difference; they don't vote because they don't think it matters. And I always ask them whether they think that it mattered that we turned the economy around, that it was a hard-fought legislative battle. I ask them whether they think it matters that we did finally pass a Family and Medical Leave Act that now 20 million Americans have taken advantage of. I ask them whether they think it matters that finally, against the extraordinary opposition of the NRA, the Brady Bill was passed, and now more than 400,000 people have been turned away from their efforts to buy a weapon.

I think those things do matter. I think, as we look across the landscape of America today, we can see how it matters that our prosperity is lifting so many people—their incomes, their fortunes, their futures are rising. I think it matters in this city that there is political leadership that took on the problems of the public schools, and has made such a contribution to education reform under the mayor's leadership. So one can never

convince me that it doesn't matter, but I understand the underlying reluctance. Because of the way we communicate about politics today, it's very distancing.

My friend Deborah Tannen—whom some of you may know from her seminal work about the differences men and women have in the way that they talk—has written an incredible book about the culture of argument. And if we turn on our television sets, it looks like all of our politics is an argument. People insulting each other, yelling at each other, arguing constantly. You wouldn't want them in your home, so why do you want them on your television screens? It's just easier to try to shut it off. And I also know that in the atmosphere of the last several years, there has been a lot of negativity and the politics of personal destruction has had a major role. But, you see, if you turn away from politics because of what is happening, you leave the field clear to those who promote that kind of political agenda. And by leaving the field clear, you lose your voice and your vote in determining whether or not it would be possible to keep that kind of political mean-spiritedness out of our national life, and whether it is possible to create a more positive vision of what we want from politics.

This is a fundamental choice that each of us faces. In addition to our own voice and our own vote, we have an opportunity to come together around issues that matter. There are many significant problems, some of which can be addressed by political leadership, but most of which can only be addressed by partnerships—between government and the private sector, between the not-for-profit sector and the private sector. And creating those partnerships influences politics.

Women have an extraordinary opportunity today to make sure that the gains of this century are built on and carried into the next. I'm not going to tell you that it's easy to be involved in politics; I could never with a straight face tell you that. But I can tell you that it is rewarding. That when you do stand up for what you believe, and you see that it makes a difference, you feel like you've maybe paid back a little bit for all that you've been given.

There are some wonderful lessons that people have taught us that are not new at all that I would recommend to you. Eleanor Roosevelt, one of my favorite predecessors, wrote a very influential essay back in the 1920s about women in politics. Basically, she said that women had to be much better prepared than men, that women had to be ready to be questioned and criticized, that women had to grow skin as thick as a rhinoceros. But she urged women to do all of the necessary steps to be politically active. Because she understood, as she often said, that you must do the thing you think you cannot do. And one of my favorite Eleanor Roosevelt sayings is, "Women are like teabags, they don't know how strong they are until they get into hot water."

We also need women to use their pocketbooks and their financial resources. We lost two very impressive candidates in the last months—Christie Todd Whitman and Elizabeth Dole. I may be of another party, but I admired both of them and their willingness to enter the political fray. They both basically said that raising the money was just too much of an obstacle. It is still harder for women to raise money in our

political system. And women who now control a majority of the wealth, the individual wealth in America, have an opportunity to participate financially, and I would urge you to do that.

I know that Mrs. Dole had hoped to be here today and was not able to come. And I am often asked, when do I think a woman will be president. Well, again, Eleanor Roosevelt was asked, and she said by the 1970s. And in the 1970s, Rosalynn Carter was asked, and she said by the year 2000. So now, to play it safe, I'll say in the 21st century. But part of the reason it's so difficult and daunting a challenge is because of the way we finance campaigns. So while I urge you to participate financially because that is a way for your voice to be heard, and for you to support candidates whom you believe will speak for the issues that you care about, I also hope that women's voices will be heard more loudly in the effort to change the campaign finance rules, because I believe that they are undermining our democracy and undermining the voices of many citizens.

So voting, raising your voice, becoming part of coalitions, contributing to candidates, advocating for change—they are all ways that each of us can participate. And then there is the next step—that more and more women are taking—to become candidates, and then to serve in public life.

I don't know that it is any different anywhere else in the world, where I have met many women who have taken the step to become active in their country's political process, but I do think our system is harder in many ways. Because in a parliamentary system, a woman is a colleague. Margaret Thatcher could get to know her colleagues, and her colleagues could develop a relationship with her. And she could represent a relatively small constituency, and through hard work and leadership be chosen by her colleagues to head her party.

A woman in our country has a much stiffer hill to climb, but I am pleased that more and more women are doing just that. I am learning a little bit more about that myself these days, and I admire any woman and any man who will step forward, and I urge more of you to think seriously about doing that.

And then for those who hold office, it's a real challenge to keep focused on the issues that matter. In our system, you are elected to Congress, or you are elected governor, or you are elected senator, or to the state legislature. And for many who are elected, they have to start immediately campaigning for office again, and that means raising the money that is necessary to fund those campaigns.

So there are many people, as we have seen in the last years, who are resigning or are failing to run because they just don't think the process works. I understand their concerns, but I think it's important that we not give up and walk away from the process, but continue to try to reform it.

Finally, I would say that if politics is to be meaningful in the next century, we are going to have to take advantage of technology, and we are going to have to learn how

better to communicate with each other. And there is no reason why women cannot be at the forefront of doing just that—breaking new ground in how the political process actually will work. Because if we look at the issues that await us, I think we have unfinished business of the 20th century—to continue our economic progress and make sure it reaches every single American; to continue reforming our public education system, and ensure that every child has a chance to learn and has access to the information age technology that he or she will require; to make it possible for us to once again put patients and doctors in the center of the health care system; to ensure that we do what is necessary to keep guns out of the hands of children and criminals; to protect our environment.

On so many fronts, we have the unfinished work of this century. But we also will face new challenges, and those new challenges range from ensuring that we finally have a health care system that provides quality, affordable health care to every American; to looking for ways to marry the environment and the economy so that we don't pit one against the other; to ensuring that the digital divide is just a phrase and not a fact that further widens the wealth gap in our country; to working on the unfinished business of making this one America where all people are respected and have a chance to participate fully; to continuing to lead around the world and making clear that America is the strongest force for peace and prosperity and stability, and that means doing things like looking for ways to end the spread of nuclear weapons, and dealing with threats like global warming and proliferation of chemical and biological weapons, and ensuring that we are up to speed on our public health agenda so that we don't have the spread of epidemics or other challenges. There is much much work to be done.

The other night at the White House, we had one of our Millennium Lectures—that we have had now 10 of—that are broadcast on the Internet and bring together thinkers and academics and people who have something to say about the past and the future. This one was particularly compelling because we brought together an expert in informatics and an expert in genomics. The expert in genetics said that we will find, when we map the human genome, that all human beings are 99.9 percent the same—our DNA differs by just one-tenth of a percent. You may be a man, I may be a woman, you may be black, I may be white, you may be tall, I may be medium—we have so many superficial differences, but they fit into that one-tenth of one percent.

So what do we do with this new knowledge? Do we take it as a great invitation to look for ways that we bring people together? That we celebrate our differences, but we recognize that underneath our common humanity is so much greater? Do we teach our daughters that they should celebrate being a woman, but they should recognize that their feelings, their aspirations, are rooted in a long history of development?

(END OF TAPE SIDE 1. CONTINUES ON SIDE 2, WITH SPEECH IN PROGRESS.)

...are responsible and to quit pitting women against women, homemakers against professional women, and most of us in the middle who have tried to balance both? Will

we admit that there is no single, cookie-cutter model for being a successful and fulfilled woman today? That we can choose to be a full-time mother, or have no children at all? Or as we live longer, find different ways of living out different decades of our lives?

If we can come to terms with who we are as women as we end this century and begin the next, then by our examples, by the choices we make, we will set a new course in politics, and we will pass on to our daughters the lessons that it is, as Susan said, far less important what we look like than what we feel, what we say, what we think. That it is far more important that we try to make life a little better for those who come after than to just be a captive of the consumer culture. There are a lot of decisions being made in each of our lives, and the aggregate of those decisions will affect our political life.

So I thank you for gathering to talk about politics to make sure that it is there on a stage to be discussed and not to be rejected or maligned, that we look for ways that our voices, our votes, our resources, our activism can make a difference. The 20th century has been America's century. I believe that the 21st can be a century of progress for American women.

I was recently at a conference about the future of politics, and I was there with a very distinguished British scholar who studies political developments around the world. And he said, You know, the most significant advance that has occurred in the 20th century is not what often is talked about—namely technology and productivity. He said those have been very important. But the most important advance and the most important change has been the role of women. And American women have broken new ground, have navigated uncharted waters. And he turned to me and he said, But will American women keep doing so, or will they be satisfied just to try to balance the demands of their own lives? I thought that was a good question. I think the answer is that we will continue to do what we can to use politics to advance the common good as we see it. And by doing so, continue to demonstrate the leadership that women in the past have shown that we have tried to live up to.

Thank you all very much.

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**THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. CLINTON HONOR
THEIR MAJESTIES KING JUAN CARLOS I OF SPAIN AND QUEEN SOFIA
AT A WHITE HOUSE STATE DINNER**

WASHINGTON, DC -- The President and Mrs. Clinton are hosting Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia, at a White House State Dinner on Wednesday, February 23, 2000. Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia will arrive at the North Portico at 7:15 p.m.

The President and Mrs. Clinton, and Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia will receive guests at the base of the Grand Staircase in the Grand Foyer of the White House. Following the receiving line, the President and Mrs. Clinton will escort Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia into the State Dining Room for dinner.

Tables in the State Dining Room and the Red Room will be set with Eisenhower gold base plates; the Franklin Delano Roosevelt china will be used for service. Kennedy Morgantown crystal and gold flatware from the White House Vermeil Collection will be set on golden champagne-colored tablecloths. Gold candelabras and bamboo containers from the White House Vermeil Collection will be filled with white Virginia roses, white Phalaenopsis orchids, and white gardenias with a touch of white ginestra. These centerpieces will be surrounded by gold taper and votive candles.

Following the dinner, guests will be entertained in the East Room by world-renowned opera singer Plácido Domingo. Plácido Domingo will be accompanied by acclaimed opera singer Ana Maria Martinez and pianist Eugene Kohn.

NOTE: Information on the menu, entertainment and official gifts is attached. The State Dinner Guest list will be released separately as soon as it is available.

WHITE HOUSE STATE DINNER MENU

THE STATE VISIT OF
THEIR MAJESTIES
KING JUAN CARLOS I
OF SPAIN
AND
QUEEN SOFIA
Wednesday, February 23, 2000

Menu

*Pheasant and Morel Consommé
Dumplings of Foie Gras and Confit*

*Lobster and Maine Shrimp
Saffron Risotto and Chorizo*

*Grilled Rack of Lamb
Blood Orange and Rosemary Sauce
Braised Winter Vegetables with Parsnip Purée*

*Pear and Bleu Cheese Terrine
Bouquet of Lettuces
25 Year Old Sherry Dressing*

Dessert

*Topiary Valencia
Glazed Kumquat Sauce
Caramel Walnut Candy
Butter Raspberry Ginger Cookies*

Wines

*Miramar Torres Chardonnay 1997
Artesa Pinot Noir "Bien Nacido" 1997
Gloria Ferrer "Royal Cuvée" Brut 1991*

ENTERTAINMENT

PLÁCIDO DOMINGO

Plácido Domingo has been called a "Renaissance Man of Music" because of his important activities in singing, conducting and administration. His singing career takes him to the major opera stages of the world in a repertory of one hundred sixteen different roles, more than any other singer in history. He conducts not only opera with the major companies in the United States and abroad, but also purely symphonic concerts with some of the foremost orchestras. Mr. Domingo is the Artistic Director of the Washington Opera and the Artistic Director designate of the Los Angeles Opera. He has made more than one hundred recordings for which he has won eight Grammy Awards.

Born in Madrid, Mr. Domingo moved to Mexico at the age of eight with his parents, who formed their own zarzuela company and traveled across the country performing the popular Spanish genre. It was the lively zarzuelas—which originated in 17th-century Spain and masterfully combine musical ensembles, arias, dialogue, popular songs and comedy—that gave him his first love of music. In his teens he studied piano, conducting and voice at the Mexico City Conservatory. His operatic singing debut was in Monterrey as Alfredo in *La Traviata*. After two and a half years with the Israel National Opera he joined the New York City Opera, where he created the title role of Ginastera's *Don Rodrigo* in its United States premiere. He gave his Metropolitan Opera debut in 1968 as Maurizio in *Adriana Lecouvreur* and has since performed there on more than four hundred occasions. When he sang *I Pagliacci* last fall, it was his eighteenth opening night of a Met season, thus surpassing the record set by Caruso at the beginning of the last century.

The President and Mrs. Clinton welcome Plácido Domingo with great pleasure, as his friendship with the leaders of both countries serves as a testament to the musical bond between two cultures. Tonight Mr. Domingo celebrates the visit of Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia with a performance that features some of the most beloved zarzuelas of the 20th century.

EUGENE KOHN

Eugene Kohn began his career as piano accompanist to Maria Callas, Franco Corelli, Luciano Pavarotti and Renata Tebaldi. After several years of intensive activity with regional orchestras and opera companies, Maestro Kohn debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 1980 conducting *La Gioconda* and since that time has been guest conductor in the world's major opera houses. Maestro Kohn currently divides his time between opera and symphony and is enjoying his sixth season as Music Director of the Puerto Rico Symphony.

Maestro Kohn has collaborated closely with Plácido Domingo in opera and concerts around the world. Their latest work is *Opera Gala* with Ruth Ann Swenson, Thomas Hampson and the Philharmonia Orchestra.

ANA MARIA MARTINEZ

Ana Maria Martínez was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico and raised in New York City. She was the first recipient of the Pepita Embril Award, a highly acclaimed honor named in recognition of Plácido Domingo's mother, at the Operalia 11 Competition. Ms. Martínez has performed at the major opera houses around the world, establishing an exceptional international career. Her upcoming performances include Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden, the title role in *Romeo et Juliette* at the Wiener Staatsoper, the title role in *Luisa Miller* at the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, and she returns to the Washington Opera as Liu in *Turandot*.

OFFICIAL GIFTS

PRESIDENT CLINTON'S GIFT TO HIS MAJESTY JUAN CARLOS I, KING OF SPAIN:

The official gift for His Majesty Juan Carlos I, King of Spain, from President Clinton on the occasion of his State Visit to Washington is a Tiffany & Co. handcrafted sterling silver cachepot with an engraved inscription to His Majesty. The piece features an etched border design inspired by a cornice found in the East Room of the White House and a floral design taken from the Green and Red Rooms of the White House. The flower in the center is a dogwood blossom, a tree frequently found in the President's home state of Arkansas. The cachepot was designed exclusively as a gift for President Clinton to present for the State visit. The Presidential Seal is engraved on the bottom of the silver piece.

MRS. CLINTON'S GIFT TO QUEEN SOFIA:

The official gift for Queen Sofia from Mrs. Clinton is a work of hand-blown glass by Dale Chihuly. The unique piece is a Scarlet Basket and is presented accompanied by two beautiful coffee table books describing the works of Dale Chihuly.

OFFICIAL DELEGATION GIFT:

The official gift for members of the Spain delegation is a Tiffany & Co. pewter tray with an inscription commemorating the State Visit to Washington of His Majesty Juan Carlos I, King of Spain.

THEIR MAJESTIES' GIFTS TO THE PRESIDENT AND MRS. CLINTON:

Their Majesties King Juan Carlos I of Spain and Queen Sofia present to the President six limited edition Reproduction Drawings by Diego Velazquez, a 17th Century artist. To Mrs. Clinton, they present two 18th Century Reproduction Crystal Decanters from the Royal Factory of Madrid, Crystal de la Granja, which has served the Royal Household for centuries.

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