

Women's World Cup Reception  
The White House

7/19/99

**Women's World Cup Champions Reception**  
**Remarks by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
**The White House**  
**July 19, 1999**

(President Clinton spoke first. The following are Mrs. Clinton's remarks.)

He cut out the part that said who's next. That's all right because we're used to being flexible around here. We are so pleased to have such a wonderful turnout. I want to join the President—and, I know, all of you—in expressing how much our thoughts and prayers are with the Kennedy and the Bessette families at this extraordinarily painful time. I also want to join with all of you in welcoming the United States Women's World Cup soccer champions to the White House. We are so pleased to have them. Welcome and congratulations to our "girls of summer." Not only have they captured our imaginations, they've definitely stolen our hearts. And by creating the largest women's sporting event in history, they have exploded the myth—once and for all—that women's sports can't attract fans and public attention. And it is about time that that has happened.

I want to welcome our Cabinet officials who are here. And I want to say a special word of welcome and thanks to Secretary Donna Shalala, who has been the stalwart leading the Administration forward on "girl power," and one of the greatest fans that women's soccer and this team have had. I also want to thank all the members of Congress who are here. I see a big crowd and I think everyone from every state represented by the team behind me and all the others are here. And I also am pleased that there are so many young people from soccer teams of both boys' and girls' clubs, as well as schools, from across the city. They are our future champions and they now have a bunch of superstars to look up to, and we're delighted to have them here.

The President has already said how thrilling it was for he and Chelsea and I to attend the game against Germany here in Washington, and how jealous Chelsea and I were that his schedule permitted him to get to the Rose Bowl. But we were, along with millions of Americans and fans around the world, just extraordinarily moved and excited. And I couldn't help thinking—as I can imagine many of the women in this audience, including my dear friend Tipper Gore—couldn't help thinking how times have changed.

Tipper was a great athlete in her time. Their three daughters are great athletes. I was a mediocre one at best. But I can still remember when we had to play half court basketball. I can remember when there were not many interscholastic team opportunities for girls. I can remember when we had to buy our own uniforms, such as they were. You know, the last softball team I played on, much to my embarrassment, was called the "Good and Plenties," because it was sponsored by the local candy distributor and we had to wear pink socks, black shorts, and white shirts.

But so much has changed. Back in 1985 this team had to sew the letters USA on their team jerseys themselves. But look at what has happened in a very few years.

We've learned a lot about women and what women can do to compete and to win, and to carry their country's feelings and emotions into the arena of sports.

This World Cup was not only about this team's fierce determination overcoming injuries, illness, and fatigue day after day. It was not only about teamwork and solidarity, including supporting each other on and off the field—such as baby-sitting for each other's children. It was really about changing the rules once and for all. I particularly like the idea in my mind of the contrast between preparing for a championship team, as my brothers and a lot of the men in sports I have known—you know, eating a lot of steak and getting geared up. And what I heard this team did—putting on their favorite dancing CD, singing at the top of their lungs, and painting each other's fingernails. In addition, they have volunteered to be with each other through thick and through thin, including getting two fillings if that was necessary.

But what we're really proud of today is how they have represented our country and the way they have really represented the faith that so many of us put into the idea behind Title IX: to open the gates of opportunity for athletic involvement to women. And we now have women at the intercollegiate level playing in every sport you can imagine, and a generation of women athletes who are now able to compete just as their fathers and brothers did.

The history of America is the history of people who have stepped beyond the lines that have been drawn for them, who have refused to limit their dreams, who have faced the naysayers and said, "Yes. I can do this."

Who would have imagined that these young women would be here today on the very day we are celebrating so much in our nation's history—the first walk of a human being on the moon, and tonight, Lt. Colonel Eileen Collins will become the first woman in history to become a commander of a space shuttle. I'm delighted that the team will be flying down with me so that we can be at Cape Canaveral together to cheer Lt. Colonel Collins on.

Now today, though, we not only honor this past victory, we honor the future. And I want to introduce someone to you who is already breaking through even more lines and crossing them with great aplomb. She's part of a program called D.C. Scores, which helps kids achieve on the soccer field and in the classroom. She's not only the leading scorer on her soccer team, she's a champion essayist as well. Let's welcome 6th grader Stefaney Howell from here in Washington, D.C.