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Mick Corporate Achievement Awards

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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REMARKS OF THE FIRST LADY AT THE  
VISTA CORPORATE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

MRS. CLINTON: I want to thank Fred for that award but more than that for conceiving of the idea behind it to honor the women that you see on this stage. I think that what that signifies is a recognition far beyond the award recipients themselves, but really for all of you and for millions of other Hispanic women in this country who are working hard every day to live up to their God-given potential, whatever it may be. I am just privileged to be here and be a part of this celebration.

I hope that this is an annual award because I hope that every year there will be women who exemplify the same characteristics that these women on this stage do who will be recognized by businesses in our country for their contributions. That as a result of those efforts, they will be brought to the attention of these who have endowed this award and created this extraordinary statute.

But there are many people to recognize in this audience. I could not possibly even begin, but I do want to not only thank all the businesses whose confidence in these women made this possible, but also to thank all who are members of the Clinton Administration who, every day, are breaking all kinds of barriers and demonstrating what can be done when people of either gender are given a chance to give service to their country and to do something to give back the opportunities that they have been given. There is an extraordinary number of women and men who are doing that.

I am pleased also because although we sometimes wish that awards like this would no longer be necessary, that it would become a matter of course that women would be recognized for their achievements and be given the responsibilities that they earned, we know that we are still in some way off from that. Every year I believe we grow a

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little bit closer to recognizing the fundamental work and dignity of each human being.

What I hope we can do together in both business and government is to forge a partnership that recognizes there has to be a commitment to building a stronger society that uses all of our people's potential and skills. That anytime we turn our back on a little girl in a barrio or a little boy in a ghetto, anytime a child in a school room is told that she can't do something because she's a girl or a little boy doesn't have any way out, he believes, other than to give in and join a gang, all of us are diminished. Something inside of us and something in our society withers because we have not given to all of our children the same basic rights that they deserve to have as Americans.

So, for me, recognizing these women sent a signal that I hope you will carry with you. That yes, if you do work hard, if you do apply yourself, then you can overcome barriers. By overcoming them, you blaze a path for others to come behind. So that eventually those barriers are broken down once and for all.

I just want to close by saying a word about how I spent my weekend because I think it all ties together. It was a remarkable experience, and it gave me a chance to see a lot of our young men and women and those from every other country. But it brought home to me, forcefully again, how in our country with all of our faults and shortcomings, we have provided the groundwork for people from every country, every part of the world, to come together and work for their own individual betterment and for that of our society. No other country can say that.

If we are so much stronger because of our diversity, we are the future. The globe will have to learn how to live together the way we are struggling to learn how to live together, not to melt us all together so we are unrecognizable but to lift each other up.

I came away from this weekend thinking that, you know, every four years we stop long enough to recognize the diversity of talents among our athletes. Let us pledge to stop a little bit every day to recognize the diversity and talents among all of us. Let us each build up, not tear down, so that all of us can know we have contributed to a better society that will make a difference for our children.

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Thank you all.

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