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NEW YORK WOMEN'S
AGENDA STAR BREAKFAST

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PRESERVATION

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MRS. CLINTON: Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you and let me add my word of thanks and appreciation to Ellie who has been an inspiration, a mentor, a role model, and a friend for a number of years. And I also want to thank her and Randy for taking me in. I spent the night in that apartment which is command central for every good cause that crosses the Hudson. And the two of them together are such a wonderful partnership and I am so grateful for their friendship and leadership.

I want to thank Gloria Steinem for many things, but particularly for her fiftieth birthday when she said "this is what fifty looks like." Although if you were as close to her as I am you would be wondering "why doesn't forty-seven look like that." And I am delighted to be here with Matilda and Donna two women whom I respect greatly who are giving voice and leadership to important issues. And to Susan and the other leaders from New York in the business community, this is a remarkable event. And all of the individual women who both have presented and who have been the recipients of the Star Award, I want to thank you. Thank you for what you exemplify. But more than that, you are here both because of your accomplishments, but also because of your continuing commitment to other people. And I think that is one of the real lessons of this agenda and this morning. We need always to take the time to remember where we came from, where we are going, and how we will help others along the way. And Ellie is absolutely right to have spent so many years proving that women don't bond - another one of those absurd misconceptions that I think were probably dreamed up in order to prevent us from bonding, and prevent us from helping each other, and prevent us from giving hands that will enable others to come along. So I'm grateful for all of you who have already shown that we not only bond, but we have the opportunity through that kind of networking to help other women as well.

I want to say just very briefly, because I know most of you have to get to work - and being a full time volunteer my schedule is more flexible than it use to be. I want to say a few words about the agenda that you are undertaking through this remarkable coalition. Because after all it is important to recognize individual women, but it is critical to the futures of all of us,

no matter how successful we might be at this moment in time, to remember the millions and millions of women and men and children who will benefit from the results of your coalescing work around the issues you have identified.

And I say that in a way to urge you on, and to challenge you to continue through your own individual efforts, through your own community and corporate efforts, but through this very exciting coalition above all.

We recently completed in the administration a remarkable study that some of you may know about and even have helped with called "Working Women Count." And what we did was to ask women what was going on in their lives and what they wanted to see happen for them and for their futures. We received over two hundred and fifty thousand questionnaires filled in by women all over the country. There were very few surprises - but much good information and reinforcement for what a womens agenda for our country could truly be.

Women talked about their work lives, their family lives, what they hoped to see accomplished. They talked in very specific and almost personal terms about what it was like trying to get a job, keep a job, go back to work, raise a family. At the event where we unveiled the final results, three women spoke. And I sat there listening to them because in a way they represented all of us at one point or another in our own lives. The first woman who spoke, spoke about having gone to work mid-way through her life because her husband had become disabled. And she needed to go to work in order to get a job that had health care benefits. And what it meant to her to have her first job for pay outside the home in many years - and the challenges she confronted.

The second woman who spoke was in her small company, a rising star. Anxious to do well, anxious to impress her superiors, anxious to continue her own pattern of success, but also beset by guilt about the time away from her family particularly her child. She talked about what it was like to come home at the end of a long day knowing that her son needed her attention for homework, and all of the things that children require. And having to summon up that extra energy in order to give to him and her husband what she wanted share with them.

And the third woman who spoke had made her way into a non-traditional kind of profession. The sort that we still marvel at when we see women doing. She had been a single parent. She had raised three daughters alone. And she talked about how all she really wanted on the job was the respect that she thought she had earned.

As I sat there listening to these three women I thought, there go all of us at one point or another. And I remembered my own years of wondering what I would do, wondering how I could do it, wondering how I could balance. And the words of those women have stayed with me. And the agenda that you have identified for 1995 is one that is truly an every womans agenda. But it is one that will take perhaps some redoubled efforts for us to pursue.

The first item, womens health, I cannot say often enough how important it is that we both recognize the special health needs of women, which we are finally, finally beginning to do. And that we assure, we assure means for meeting those needs.

When I first started working on health care reform and was immersed in reading all that I could, I was stunned to read that the first clinical trials for breast cancer were carried out on men. I thought I had misread and I kept reading it thinking, you know, I'm really loosing it. Finally I picked up the phone and called some of the people at NIH to find out, yes, indeed it was true. And that wasn't so very long ago. Well now we do have a federal commitment to women's health needs and we are pursuing an aggressive agenda on behalf of those needs. But we also have to recognize that many women will still go without the care they deserve to have until we recognize every person should be entitled to quality health care benefits and that's something that we should continue to work for.

The second item on the agenda, jobs and the economy, we need not only to continue as we have done for the last twenty months to see an increase in jobs, but also to recognize the quality of jobs, the income that goes with those jobs, the benefits that those jobs carry -- are particularly important for women because many women have the responsibility of being the sole breadwinner. And for many women they are still not able to fulfill their economic responsibilities to their family because their job opportunities are either not as available as they need to be or do not carry the income and benefits that are required. So we have to continue to think about ways to grow our economy and provide more incentives for the kind of expansion we have been experiencing.

And as part of jobs and the economy we need in these next months to come up with a decent welfare reform proposal that will move people from welfare to work, but will also recognize that there are some skills and some training and some child care and health needs that will also have to be met. Unless we want to see literally thousand and thousands of people on our streets and face the unbelievable and absurd idea of putting children into orphanages because their mothers cannot get a job.

The third item on the agenda that you have adopted is the media. And there are many representatives of the media here - many in positions of power and importance. And I know how difficult this issue is to address. I just hope that we begin to appreciate what we have done to ourselves and what we are doing to our children with a steady diet of the kind of media images and information that too often distorts reality - that too often gives children the idea that their futures are beset by violence and limitation and dysfunctional images. It is time for those of us who are adults to go ahead and recognize that television has become in many ways the most pervasive influence on our families. And unless we have the personal courage to turn it off and monitor it - and unless we have some collective will to change the messages as well as the medium that delivers it, we cannot ever expect our children to have the kind of understanding of the world that can come through a more balanced presentation. And I hope that you will work also for ways of improving the way women are presented in the media.

The fourth item on the agenda which Susan mentioned is domestic violence, which we made great progress on with the passage of the crime bill. Because for the very first time the federal government recognized domestic violence as a significant issue that affects women. And there are new ways through the crime bill, through funding in the crime bill for cities like New York - and your mayor who has made domestic violence a priority - to begin to have the tools to address domestic violence. But this is an issue that we all have to recognize. It goes very deeply into our culture and our society. And I hope that the work that you are doing here in New York will serve as an example so that the rest of the country will organize around this issue and do what it can to try to address it. And address it in ways that both men and women can respond positively to. Because it really is talking about the quality of our relationships together. It is not merely stopping violence, it is creating a more open, responsive, respectful, environment in which our most intimate relationships are played out. And I think this is a critical issue to continue to address.

Your next issue - city issues. For someone who did not grow up in New York, who cannot claim all of the wonderful anecdotes that so many of your speakers who receive Stars can - I love New York. And I hope that you will take the issues of this city on and do what you can to work with the administration here and the private sector here. And I also hope that you will do a little bit of the kind of missionary work that is needed. We do not need a split in our country between our urban areas and our suburban areas. I think that is one of the important problems that we are going to be facing. Suburbs could not exist without cities. To often those of us who grew up in suburbs forget that.

And I hope those of you who care about and cherish this city will make it clear to your neighbors that the synergy between the great centers of culture and business and politics that cities like New York are, working with the suburbs around it is really the way to create the kind of opportunity and growth that we need generally. And that is an issue that I anticipate will become one that we will have to address. And for those of us who love your city, I hope you take it on with a great amount of vigor.

And finally, the work you are doing on corporate and non-profit boards. It is important in both the private and non-profit sector to have more voices represented and to listen to those voices. I think that you heard from so many remarkable women this morning. And knowing that the roles they are playing will continue to be enhanced in the future but particularly if we can expand the decision making roles that they and others will be able to achieve.

These issues on your agenda all for me are related to the women whom I heard when we heard about the Working Women Count report. We all are looking for an opportunity to give voice to the needs and the desires and the aspirations of women. That voice can be both the individual voice of someone who has already achieved. But it also needs to be the voice that sometimes isn't heard, from the women who have the problems and the challenges that we have either, never faced or we have left behind. And as we listen to those voices, those voices will begin to make clear what the choices women have are and what choices they want to make for themselves. One of the great challenges we still face is to overcome the stereotypes that still grip us. And to know that choices for women today are such a broad array of possibilities. And none of us should be stereotyped. None of us should be put in the position of being told that our choices are illegitimate. Whether we are full time homemakers, full time career women, or engaged in the juggling act that so many of us do, our choices should be respected for what they are. And knowing that they may very well change in the course of our lives.

So giving voice to ourselves, giving voice to other women respecting and enhancing the choices that we all have, and then finally having a vision for our own lives and the lives of our friends, our neighbors, and the life of our community. That's what this great gathering for me is about. Voices, choices, and vision. And I hope that each one of us will leave here this morning energized and recommitted with, as someone said, the passion and purpose of an Ellie Gugenheimer(phonetic), knowing that we can make a difference. Maybe a difference in the life of a child, maybe the difference in the life of a co-worker, maybe the difference in the life of a corporation or a city. But we

have such opportunity now. Let's use it and let's make the
agenda for the future one that we all are committed to achieving.

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