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**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TO THE WOMEN'S CAMPAIGN OF THE UNITED JEWISH APPEAL
CRYSTAL CITY, VIRGINIA**

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you Suzie for that introduction and all of your hard work as evidenced by this extraordinary conference. I'm glad to be here with Lois and Richard, and Carol, and Nettie. Your remarks were eloquent and moving. And Rabbi I have at least three thank you's for you after listening to your remarks.

The first is for imbuing my irrelevance to my daughter with spiritual meaning. I am so lucky to have a wonderful daughter but those of us in this room who either currently have or have ever had teenagers know that despite one's best efforts, you cross that line into irrelevance and you see it in their eyes and you see it in their moving back and forth or it's anything else where they're saying this is great but I've got better things to do.

Secondly, thank you for expressing, I think, for so many of us what is sometimes difficult to put into words. Talking about the spiritual dimension of one's own personal life or the need for recognizing spiritual importance in our collective lives is not easy because there are many who have attempted to force spirituality into little tiny boxes. Who have attempted to take religion and use it not as a way to welcome people into the fellowship of love, but to draw lines between us and to be able to talk about this is I think a very good way to start this conference. It's so important and especially today when we do know there is a great hunger for meaning in our lives that goes beyond the material and a great desire amongst many of us to do what we can to create a more spiritual center in the lives of our families and our communities and it's important to think of it not only in abstract theological terms but in the everyday. What is it we do everyday in the way we treat one another, in the way we respond to requests for help, in the level of patience and kindness we show in our own efforts to quell the inevitable desire to control to manipulate. Those are the kinds of daily questions that each of us should be asking and to put it into that kind of format is very helpful for me personally.

And finally, Rabbi, thank you for saying what you said about the peace process. It is never easy to do what the leadership of your country is attempting to do but as my husband has said, "One of the great challenges we face, not only in the Middle East but in many other parts of the world, is to have the courage to take risks for peace." And I join you in your words of support for what is being attempted and the importance that it holds, not only for those of us who care about and support Israel, but for the entire human family.

I think it is significant that you would start this conference with that kind of message. Because as we think about how to use the resources that we have individually and collectively, I am as I always am impressed by the level of commitment from UJA and from the Line of Judah and all of you who are a part of these on-going efforts.

We often have to stop and ask ourselves what is the real meaning of what we are attempting to do. What is my contribution to that. Each and everyone of you gathered here brings enormous contributions. You bring not only financial, mental, emotional, resources but you bring the spiritual ones as well. And too often in the world today we find ourselves being divided up as though we could be fragmented into our various roles, into our various concerns.

Much of what you are trying to do by reaching out to those who need help, by taking a stand on behalf of the greater effort that unites us, is to search for a kind of integrity in what it means to be a human being and particularly a woman in today's world. The work that you have done is an example of what happens when, as Betty said, women from all walks of life with different experiences join together to make their voices heard and particularly on behalf of those who might not be heard otherwise.

I recently saw the same kind of energy and commitment at the UN Conference in Beijing. That conference was intended to focus the world's spotlights on the concerns that confront girls and women every single day throughout the world and to bring new respect and dignity to the work and the worth of girls and women -- and by doing so, to bring new strength and stability to families, communities, countries, and our world.

What went on there, I thought, was very important because people came together from more than 180 nations, not only to draw attention to issues that matter, but also to share ideas about how we could do things better. That is the kind of work you are doing. When you bring ideas that have worked in other parts of the world back to the United States or when you take American ideas and transplant them elsewhere, you are helping to fertilize that common ground and common good that needs so much attention and care today.

Too often the issues that you work on -- the issues that I've worked on for twenty-five years, the issues that I saw being discussed and debated in Beijing -- are dismissed as "soft issues", as women's issues. Issues that don't really have much to do with the important pressing problems that face us across the globe. Issues that don't belong in the board rooms, or in the TV studios or, in the corporate offices around the world. But I think that is wrong. Because these issues, issues that could be broadly summed up as the Rabbi did how we love and allow ourselves to be loved, those issues are hard issues. They are the hardest issues we face as individuals and they are the hardest issues before us in the world today.

Every country will rise or fall in the next millennium on the basis of how they care for each other. It matters little if they open new markets or expand trade, if their GDE and GNP and all those other initials go up if the quality of life amongst the people who live in these places deteriorates. And in today's world the pressures on all of us derived from complexity and modernism, from the information age and technology, from alienation and that spirit and body-killing meaninglessness -- those are the ones we have to come to grips with.

Every person in the world, whether he or she knew it has a stake in what was discussed in Beijing. Women comprise more than half of the world's population. In some parts of the world however, they are falling rapidly, as a percentage of the population because they are killed at birth, they are aborted because they are girls, they are denied medical care, they are not fed. And so in some countries that more than half is below what is expected.

Women are 70% of the world's poor and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write. Women take care of most of the world's children, run the households, combine not only those responsibilities but also with contributing to the income and economic survival of their families.

If women are healthy, educated, literate, safe from violence, and able to contribute economically and politically; they will flourish and their families will flourish. And if families flourish, then communities and nations do as well. That is why investing in the lives of women and girls is one of the soundest investments any society can make.

We have seen in developing countries, and even here in disadvantaged areas of our own, what happens when women are given access to small loans, the kind of projects that are beginning to spring up around the world. They use them as seed money to create livelihoods for themselves and to improve living conditions for their families.

When my daughter and I were in Bangladesh, earlier this year we visited some projects run by the Grameen Bank under the leadership of Dr. Mohammed Janus. We went to a village of untouchables outside a city named Jessore. They were Hindus and no one ever came to their village but through these small loans over the last four years women have begun to make income that they are using to buy their children back from servitude where they had been sold so they could help support the family. They are seeking wells for better water. They are buying rickshaws for their husbands so that they can help contribute as well. They are adding milk cows and goats to the family livestock.

When it was known in the area that I would be visiting this village, a neighboring village that also was participating in the Grameen Bank efforts asked if I could come there as well and my schedule just couldn't expand to make that possible. So instead this village said could our women come and join Mrs. Clinton. That was a remarkable question because that was a Moslem village in a predominately Moslem country. So when I came to this village, there were Hindu women and Moslem women sitting together ready to tell me what had happened in their lives since someone had invested a very small amount of money but a very large amount of hope in their futures.

Those kinds of efforts are beginning to bear fruit. So what we saw in Beijing was not just another conference and not just a lot of rhetoric. If we follow-up in all of the small ways we can individually and in the larger ways that groups like this can do and through businesses and governments make a commitment to girls and women, we will see progress and that progress will make our world safer, more prosperous, and more democratic.

It begins with respecting the human rights of all people and in parts of the world where women are not considered valued. It means respecting their rights as well. It means respecting decisions women make about their own families and ensuring that those decisions are free from government coercion of any kind. It means giving women the access to health care throughout their life and the access to education.

I was very proud of the American delegation that represented our country headed by our Ambassador to the United Nations Madeline Albright. It was a distinguished group of forty-five men and women, Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives, Americans of all walks of life. But to a person they were united in their commitment to making it possible for us to say and for women to believe everywhere in the world they are valued, they have rights, and they should be given the opportunities to make the most of their God-given potential.

It is no accident that this conference, happening as it did where it did caused a lot of commotion and controversy. It seems

whenever women's issues are discussed that happens automatically. But despite dire predictions the conference did lead us to an understanding of what we can do to make the future better.

And the issues are not only ones for China or India or Africa or South America. They are also issues for us here at home. I have been meeting with groups of working women who are struggling to keep body and soul together, who are worried about their children's futures, their education, crime on the street, their access to health care -- the kinds of worries that are really at the forefront of any woman or any mother or any person who cares about how she can make sure her family is going to be safe.

As we look at what we need to do in our own country, we have many blessings to be grateful for. Clearly our women and girls have more opportunities than are even dreamed of in many parts of the world and that's one of the reasons it was so important that American voices were heard. But we also have to understand what women and men in America are up against these days as well. Because, even though one has enough food on the table, one has a job, the insecurity that people live with today some of it directly related to this gnawing sense of meaninglessness in life makes people vulnerable to all kinds of pulls and pushes that appeal not to their hopes but to their fears. That's why it's more important than ever that people like us speak out on behalf of a positive vision for the future, hold out the promise of hope wherever we are whatever we do, and understand that there are ways in our own lives to build those solid foundations that give people the sense of security that permit them to love and be loved.

I hope that this conference, whose itinerary looks so inviting to me that I wish I could sit in the audience to hear many of your speakers, inspires each of you to think through what you and I can do better in our own lives starting in our own homes and then branching out from there because the work ahead of us is exciting work, it truly is the work of trying to help build the future we all confront. And I am grateful that you have made a commitment, not only on behalf of Jews around the world, but on behalf of what it means to be a human being as we approach a new century. That will be the critical issue. It may not be discussed much in political campaigns. It may be considered a soft or primarily a woman's issue but we know in our hearts that the hard work of building love and hope is the work of salvation for us and our children. Thank you all very much.

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