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**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS, FAYETTEVILLE COMMENCEMENT**

Thank you. Thank you very much. Thank you all so much. It is such a great honor and pleasure for me to be here this morning. It feels great to be home, to see so many friends, to reminisce about past times here at the University at Fayetteville and in Arkansas.

Chancellor Ferritor, and President Sugg, Chairman Epley and distinguished members of the Board of Trustees, all of the administrators and faculty members, Mrs. Jones, and students, particularly those who have just been honored, but all of you who are graduating either with baccalaureate degrees or advanced degrees as part of the ceremonies today.

I do think of Fayetteville as home. It is the first place I lived when I followed my heart to Arkansas and came here to join the faculty of the law school because I had met a young man from Arkansas named Bill Clinton. We loved our years at the university. I can remember still sharing an office in Waterman Hall with Milt Copeland. I can remember the un-air conditioned classrooms in the heat of the fall and the spring. I can remember many walks across the campus with my friends, fellow professors like Diane Blair or Ann Henry. I can remember the students who I faced every day in class and felt that they were amongst the smartest and most promising young people in the entire country. I can remember all that it took for me to become a member of this community, both because I was on the faculty, but because I loved living here.

There were some adjustments, I do recall, to living in Fayetteville. I had never lived in a place quite as small as this town was then, more than twenty years ago. And, when I'd go to the IGA and write a check for food and the woman behind the cash register would look for a minute and then kind of size me up and say, "Oh, you're the new lady law professor."

[Laughter]. I realized that I was in a place where everyone would know me and that was a phenomenon that I would either get used to or have to put up with in some way. I also realized that the connections among people here at this university were ones that I had missed in my previous years. And that I soon began almost taking for granted.

One Saturday when I was in my office and catching up on the work of the past week and still very concerned about knowing all of my students, even though I had quite large classes, I realized that one young man had not appeared in class for an entire week. And I worried about that, so I called information. I got an operator, those were the days when you actually had a human voice on the other end of the telephone. And I said, "I'm looking for a number for...and I named the young man, "John Jones." And the operator said, "Is that Johnny Jones on Oak Street?" And I said, "I believe that's right." And the operator said, "He's not home." I said, "Excuse me?" She repeated, "He's not home, he went camping." I don't know that anywhere else in the world could a university faculty member pick up the phone and talk to an information operator who knew where her student was. But that's the kind of place this university was, and is, and I trust will continue to be. A place of excellence and commitment, but also of those connections, those values that Jason talked about.

I want to say for this audience particularly, that this university is one of our nation's best kept secrets. It's one of the finest public institutions of higher learning anywhere. I would put this faculty up against any other in the nation. I would put the students up against any others in the nation, and I would recommend the spirit of inclusiveness, egalitarianism and community that this place embodies to many, many others. So I want to thank all of you for being part of a state and a community and a university I love, and for inviting me back to share this celebration. I have to confess that when Chancellor Ferritor referred to my earlier graduation speech in 1988, I was a little taken aback because I honestly didn't remember speaking. That's what happens when you get older. At least to me. But I did remember, seeing on the platform together, Senator Fullbright and the late and former Representative Claude Pepper. And I recall so distinctly their being here, both of them with their connections to this university, and one kidding the other about how he was older and therefore wiser and the other was younger and therefore could remember more. I of course, thought I was merely a spectator.

I now recall that I actually was speaking as well. Because I saw so much that happened here in those years that I do remember, of which I was not a part at all. It was watching the pride on the faces of young students who were the first in their families to attend the university. Talking to parents who had sacrificed and given all they could to ensure that those students would be here. And since tomorrow is Mother's Day, I want to thank and congratulate all of the parents, especially the proud mothers and fathers, but also grandparents, husbands, wives, sons and daughters, all whose sacrifice has made it possible for the accomplishments we celebrate today.

It is something that we often take for granted in our country, that we have the finest system of higher education in the world. That we educate so many of our young people, sending them out into this changing global economy and global society. prepared as best we can provide for them to meet the challenges of their time.

Now it is common for commencement speakers to try to sum up or at least to illuminate some part of that experience that awaits all of you. But there isn't anyone that I know of who can predict with any accuracy or certainty what is going to happen tomorrow, or the next day, or the one after that. It becomes even more difficult when we live amidst the pace of change that marks the end of this century and the beginning of this new millennium.

If we look back through history, we can see that every generation faced challenges and many who preceded us thought that they were living in times that would never improve, that would not get better. We can look back at the last millennium and we can see people who then thought civilization was at an end. We can look back at this last century, and none of us, were we here in 1896, I believe, could have predicted at all what has happened since. But we do know that the challenges and the change are a constant. And yet we also should see them as opportunities. And there are two ways each of us has to address both, in our individual lives and in our lives in the larger world.

Yes, a new global economy gives us the possibility of greater prosperity, but also stiffer competition. Yes, new technology can bring us closer together, but virtual reality cannot substitute for human connections and relationships. Yes, the dynamics of family life are changing, with mothers and fathers and sons and daughters struggling to make sense of who is

responsible for what in the most intimate of our relationships. With people in the workforce in this country at higher than ever averages, but nothing substitutes for the love, the attention, the discipline and the acceptance that comes only through the family.

And the world around us is changing. We see that every day. Now in the midst of such change it is always tempting to look for and seize upon easy answers, to use stereotypes and generalizations to describe the world, to box it up to try to make sense of it. That is, I believe, to be expected.

We find ourselves sifting and sorting out all of these competing tensions and values. And sometimes if we are not careful, simplifying them to the point that we do ourselves and the times in which we live an injustice. That is one of the reasons why education, creating that tension inside where we are able to carry different values together to make sense of disparate pieces of information is so critical. But we have to do it with an understanding of the importance of those with educations to stand up against the easy answers, the stereotypes, the labels.

For example, you know the kind of thing I'm talking about. We see it every day in the media:

If you're under 25, you're an apathetic Generation X'er.

If you're over 40, you're a self-indulgent Baby Boomer.

If you're a liberal, you're a bleeding heart.

If you're a conservative, you have no heart.

If you're a Democratic President from Arkansas, you're accused of being all of the above, depending on what day it is.

And if you're the wife of a Democratic President from Arkansas, you have to worry about your hair a lot. [Laughter].

The truth is, there is no single label or definition that applies to any one of us, nor to any issue we face. Our world is too complex for that. So we need, as difficult as it may be, to shift our thinking away from stereotypes and labels that prevent us from seeing what is happening in front of us and from having some sense of a vision about what we need to be as people as we move forward.

How do we take the values that have stood the test of time and move forward into a time that is so rapidly challenging them.

One place to begin is where we all come from. Our families, our communities, our work, our country. The people who have come before us at every point in history have faced the same issues. Individually, we have struggled for meaning in our life, economic security, relationships of importance to us, to make a contribution, to leave something behind.

In the economic world, we have struggled to both have and to create jobs, to raise incomes, again, to leave something a little better than what we found.

But we also are defined by and help define our times because of our role as citizens. And our relationship to our political process and our government. I know how fashionable it has become in recent years to bash politics and government, to look upon public service with contempt. I hear it all the time, the airwaves are filled with that kind of talk. And I'm grateful that we live in a country that permits us, encourages us, to criticize our government and our political process.

But I do get tired of hearing people blame every problem we have on government. That to me is a cop out. Government is part of the larger society in which we live and work, but so are businesses and schools and religious institutions and families and community groups. All of us have a responsibility to do what we do better, to make a greater contribution, and to work toward some vision of a society that realizes our fundamental values.

Now of course government is not perfect by any means. And the practice of politics has never been easy. Max Weber once said that politics is "a strong and slow boring of hard boards." And often the progress that is made seems minuscule in comparison to the issues we confront.

But politics is about more than casting and counting votes. Government is about more than buildings and bureaucrats. Both are essential to the functioning of our democracy and both are critical to the future our country holds for any of us.

We are a better country today because previous generations worked together through the political system to solve the problems they faced.

Previous generations were creative when they devised the G.I. Bill or Social Security or Medicare. When they passed child labor laws or other protections for workers to equal the balance between business and labor. When the minimum wage was established as the floor on which a decent living should be built. Previous generations in a bipartisan spirit turned to the environment to clean up our air and our water so now we don't see, as I did, years ago, lakes that burned because they were so polluted. We have seen much change because of government and politics which has benefited those of us in this great arena, our parents, our grandparents, and our children.

There is no enterprise more important for the investment in all of our people than education -- education which is not only a door of opportunity for individuals, but which does set a framework for accomplishment in the larger society. And education today is as important as it has ever been for moving the entire community forward together. That's why places like this university are so important. That's why we must continue to invest in the education of all our young people. That's why we must support public education. Yes, reform it, change it, make it better, but recognize that public education is critical to the democracy that we appreciate and take for granted. [Applause].

We also now need to be sure that the doors of higher education are open to all who are willing to work hard and take responsibility. Now is not the time to cut back on this country's historic commitment to higher education. Now is the time redouble our efforts to make sure that no young person is denied education because of financial need. [Applause].

And there are creative ways to do that. Increasing work study, maintaining programs like Pell grants, looking for ways to provide tax credits for people who make the financial sacrifice to send their children and other loved ones to college. So education is a process that brings together the family, the individual, teachers and others committed to leading forth the minds of all of you here. And government, which represents us, because we have a stake in the accomplishments of each of you.

When I hear people complain about government in our country, I can't help but be reminded of what I have seen in my travels over the last few years. I remember meeting a young Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal who had walked ten hours from a remote village to catch

a bus to come to Kathmandu to visit with me. She told me how much she was enjoying her experience working in a village school, trying hard to persuade families to send their girls as well as their boys to school. She told me with great pride of all the diseases that she had encountered and overcome. I was just grateful that I was not her mother as she did that. She also said that she had not realized what she had just assumed was her birthright living here in this country. Of course she missed her family, but she also missed safe drinking water and safe food that could be bought at a supermarket all year long. She missed free public schools for all children. She missed hot water and electricity, paved roads, cars, and phones that work.

Those may be little examples of what we have accomplished together. But they represent the larger spirit of how we have worked for more than 200 years to solve problems. I thought again about the blessings we have when I was recently in Bosnia with my daughter. I was privileged to go there to meet our troops to thank them for undertaking this mission. Before I met with them, however, I met with a group of civilians from Sarejevo and Tuzla and other parts around Bosnia. And I listened to them as they told me of what they had survived over the last four years. Doctors and nurses who had kept the most rudimentary facilities for care going despite bombardment. Mothers and fathers who had lost children. Wives who hadn't seen husbands. And there was a bewilderment in their voices about why and how it had occurred. And yet there was also a hopefulness that perhaps now with the world helping, with at least some cessation of the hostilities and an effort toward a lasting peace, they too could resume normal life.

And then I visited our soldiers and I wish all of you could have been there with me. I went out to two outposts, Camp Alicia and Camp Bedrock, and there I saw America: black and white and brown, men and women, Christian, Muslim, Jew, kids from the country, kids from the city, every kind of person, serving our country in the cause of peace.

And I realized that we have, despite our imperfections and flaws, what others are yearning for and even dying to achieve. We did it through something called politics and government. We did it by having ideals and values that we continue to try to strive toward. So as we face our individual futures with all of the challenges we confront, I hope we will also face together the challenge of perfecting our union, respecting the processes that have enabled us to take for granted our many blessings, and to recognize that

each of us has a role. Citizenship and service is not just for someone else. In order to maintain a stable democratic government that protects individual rights and provides services that benefit us all, each of us must be a participant.

I hope that as all of you who are graduating go forward into your own future, you will also think of yourselves as stewards of democracy. That doesn't mean that you will ever run for office. That doesn't mean you will marry someone who runs for office. But it does mean that you will take seriously the gifts we have all been given and do what each of us should do to pass them on to those who come after.

With all that stands before us today, I am optimistic and I am confident that this country and what it has given to each of us, will continue to grow stronger and remain an example for what we mean when we talk about our democracy, our constitution, our beliefs. We can live them out individually, and we can ensure we live them out collectively in the service of this nation.

Thank you all and good luck to each of you.
[Applause].

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