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National Council of
Jewish Womens', 40th
Annual Convention

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

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**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN'S
40TH NATIONAL CONVENTION
DETROIT, MICHIGAN**

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you very much, and it gives me such an enormous personal pleasure to be here when Nan becomes your incoming president. As she told you, we have known one another for now more than 10 years. I have always felt very close to her, even though we have not been able to spend a lot of time together, with her living in Southern Florida and my living elsewhere.

But we've not only been able to work together, principally on behalf of HIPPIE over the years, but she has been a very warm and supportive friend to me personally. And I think it's difficult when you get older, number one, but when you get into positions like the one I find myself in now, to make new close friends it's hard. And I will never forget at one point in the past year, when Nan and a friend of hers came to see me at the White House just to say they were there as my friends. That meant so much to me, and I think that this organization is extremely lucky to have a new leader who follows in the tradition of the other extraordinary leaders you have had, who understands not only the public issues that we need to confront, but the personal needs that people face. And on behalf of myself personally, I want to thank you, Nan, and congratulate you on this new position.

I am also very honored -- I cannot imagine any honor that I have been more moved by -- to receive this from an organization I have so much respect for. To receive an award that is called the Faith and Humanity Award is overwhelming, and I want to thank you. But I particularly came here today not to thank you for this honor, but to join with old and new friends in thanking you for your leadership on behalf of faith and humanity.

The work that you have done, are doing, and will continue to do makes such a difference in so many lives, and it could not be done without the personal commitment of time, energy, and resources that each of you bring to it. I wish all of you could have been with me over the years as I watched the HIPPIE program in Arkansas literally change lives, awaken in mothers what many of us took for granted -- that we would have such an enormous impact on our own children, that we would be our child's first

teacher. But as a woman told me, "I always knew I was supposed to keep him safe, and feed him, and send him to school, but I never knew before HIPPIE I had anything to teach my son." The kind of life-changing experiences that you have helped to bring about, not only with HIPPIE, but with so many of the projects you have sponsored, are ones that I hope you understand the significance of.

There are few organizations in the world that do as much as the National Council of Jewish Women to brighten the futures of children and families. Your efforts on behalf of parents, whether through HIPPIE or your Day of the Working Parent events that Susan mentioned, or the exciting new Parents as School Partners project that you have undertaken recently reflect your faith in our common humanity and our ability to move forward together as a society, not just in our own country, but around the globe into the new millennium.

Your original motto, "Faith and Humanity," certainly is timely today. Today our faith in our world and in each other has been put to the test. Our ability to feel that we are part of a common humanity is often under attack by those who would attempt to divide us.

We know as we meet here in Detroit that across an ocean, the people of Israel are responding to unspeakable acts of terror. When young men are willing to strap bombs to their bodies and to sow destruction that kills innocent children and people on the streets of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, we can only shake our heads and feel the pain in our hearts. Logic does not apply, reason cannot explain, and our own faith in humanity is tested. Which requires us all to dig deep within our hearts and souls to understand why such hatred and violence is happening and what we can do individually and collectively to stand against it and stop it.

In the past week, the President has made it clear that the United States will stand behind Israel through good times and bad. As Americans, we must do everything we can to help ease the grief of the Israeli people and to permit peace to take hold in the Middle East. Just a few days ago, the President attended the memorial service at the Israeli Embassy in Washington. I want to repeat part of what he said because it is a message not only for that very sad occasion, but for us as we move into the future. He said, "Our faith may be shaken, but we must persevere. These fanatical acts are aimed, not just at killing innocent people, but at killing the promise of peace. We must not allow these forces of hate to derail our historic journey. The best way to defeat them is to bolster the peace they fear."

The President has pledged to the Prime Minister that the United States will work with Israel and our friends in the Middle

East to stop the killing, to bring the criminals to justice, and to permit the peace process to continue. Earlier this week, he announced the transfer to Israel of sophisticated equipment for detecting explosives, he dispatched American specialists in counterterrorism, and provided other technical assistance to help Israel root out violence and to find the perpetrators.

This coming week, the President will travel to Egypt to take part in an anti-terrorism summit hosted by President Mubarak. As King Hussein of Jordan said when he met with the President in the White House on Thursday, the latest terrorist bombings are the work of, and I quote, "a small group against an overwhelming majority in our region who are seeking peace."

I think that the challenge we face in the Middle East is certainly an extreme and horrific example of what we face in other parts of the world today. When I went to Northern Ireland, I met with Protestants and Catholics who are attempting to bridge the differences between them to find their common humanity. I had an extraordinary meeting with a group of women who themselves had lost husbands and brothers -- a group that was led by a remarkable woman named Joyce McCartan who had seen her 17-year-old son killed before her very eyes. These women knew the wages of hatred and violence and were determined to stand against that small group in their society who want to change the course of history by sowing hatred instead of working with each other to create a better future. We see the same thing at work in the former Yugoslavia, where people are tired of the killing, tired of the ethnic violence and hatred, and struggling against great odds to find their common humanity.

Despite these examples of violence that occur that still bring such terror to innocent people, we are seeing signs of progress as well. About 10 days ago, I met with a group of Israeli and Palestinian teenagers at the White House. They were traveling through the United States -- sponsored by Peace Now as part of the Israeli-Palestinian youth dialogue program -- and each of them told me what had drawn them to the peace movement and what their hopes were. It was impossible not to be moved by their courage and not to feel in some ways their young wisdom because they knew what would make for the best possible future for themselves.

One 16-year-old Israeli boy talked about the devastation he felt after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. And yet he said after that tragedy he felt a new resolve to work for peace. He told me, "I think it is the only way of living that is really worth fighting for." A young Palestinian boy talked about the fear he felt during the Intifada and the pain he endured when a classmate was killed in that violence. His own hopes were that his people, too, would understand how important dialogue and negotiations were for progress for both Israelis and

Palestinians. He said, "My main concept is blood brings more blood."

If you look in the faces of young people from Belfast to Sarajevo to Jerusalem to Tel Aviv and Gaza, you can see what our challenge is, but also what our hope has to be. These young people are showing great faith in themselves by standing up for peace. They are standing against the siren songs of easy answers of how violence solves problems and taking their stand instead in favor of the long, slow, and sometimes discouraging work of bringing peace and reasserting a positive future.

Speaking to all of you, I am reminded how much you have invested in the American family and in our global family. HIPPIE is not only in Israel and the United States, it's in other countries as well. Your example and your work serves to inspire people who are inclined sometimes to give up on the brighter future that you're determined to help create.

You also remind me that we are part of a village today, maybe more than we have since we used to live in small places that were physical villages. We know none of us can meet the challenges of today's world alone. Certainly young Israelis and Palestinians need each other to work for peace. Young mothers in America need the help that is provided through programs like HIPPIE so that they feel they're not alone and they learn what they can do to be better parents.

When I think about all of the challenges we confront in America, I am not pessimistic, I am not fearful, and I am not negative. I'm, in fact, quite optimistic and hopeful. Does this mean I think it will be easy for us even in this most stable and pluralistic and certainly relatively tolerant of countries to meet our challenges? No, I don't. I think we are living in a time of insecurity and transition when, as we work our way through, we will see many examples of people who would rather derail progress than contribute to it. But I think that history is on our side. I believe that the opportunities we have now to work together in pursuit of our common humanity far outweigh the difficulties we are confronted with.

It not only takes a village to raise a child and to give that child hope in his or her future. It takes a village to come together to stand against violence, intolerance, and hatred and bigotry. It takes people joining hands and hearts, even when they disagree with one another, but putting those disagreements into a proper perspective, minimizing them in order to make progress.

Much of what you do by reaching out to those in need is to search for the integrity of what it means to be a human being today, and particularly to a woman in today's world. The work

you have done is an example of what happens when women join together and make their voices heard, particularly on behalf of those who would otherwise remain voiceless.

Each of you, as you know, has a stake in what kind of country and world we build. I believe that in the days and months ahead when we are confronted with new and unpredictable challenges at home and abroad, in times that are risky and pose dangers to our hopes, that we can look to many of the things NCJW has done and to the organization itself as an example of a positive vision, of a village, if you will, at work.

Our entire human family depends upon all of us to help secure a lasting peace with security in the Middle East, but so does our entire human family. If we look at our country today, we can see two stark views of the future.

One which wants more and more of us to basically make it on our own, to withdraw help for education and health care from all of us, but with particular impact on the most vulnerable among us. A view of the world in which security is only what you can make for yourself, with very little of the sense of obligation that knits us together as a society. I've heard it described this point of view really believes that people are a crowd, not a community.

The opposing view to that is that we owe each other more than that. That we owe each other respect, that we owe each other a helping hand when that hand is needed. That, yes, we intend for people to be responsible for themselves, but we have a little different, and I would argue broader, view of what life brings to all of us. There but for the grace of God go many of us. We've all had friends who fall on hard times through no fault of their own. We look at the statistics and we see that the poorest group of people in our country now are our children. We look at the income of our elderly and we see that the median income for the majority of women over the age of 65 in America is \$9,000 or less. We see people not as statistics, but as individuals with their own particular needs and wants.

And so I hope that as we work to achieve what faith and humanity means to NCJW, we do so in our own lives and the lives of our broader communities. Every single day, our entire human family will be affecting how my daughter lives in the future. There is no place to hide in the global village. We are knit together now in ways that through communications and transportation and all of the other technological developments that have occurred make what happens elsewhere directly affect what happens here at home.

I don't think we have any choice as to which side of the vision we choose if we want to live in a society that honors the

values that you stand for. That for what you have done I am personally grateful, but more than that. I think your standing up for what makes a difference in children's and families' lives is in a direct way standing up for the kind of society we all want to live in. So, on behalf of the President and many others who are grateful for your work, I say thank you. But I also ask you now, when we know it will be difficult, redouble your efforts to remain committed to the vision you hold and what kind of society you want to leave to our children.

Thank you very much.

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