

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**January 24, 1996
Womens' Conference
Circle**

THE WHITE HOUSE

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**REMARKS BY FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
TO THE WOMEN'S CONFERENCE CIRCLE
THE WHITE HOUSE**

MRS. CLINTON: I am delighted that so many of the Women's Conference Circle could come here today because we have been looking forward to this day for months. Many of you know that the idea for the Circle was born out of the great interest in the Beijing Conference and the ideas that were just flooding in from around the country from people like yourselves who wanted to be a part of this process.

I think that the Beijing Conference has already had a significant influence on many Americans. I am still asked about it. When I'm out travelling, people -- always women, say, "Well, what are we going to do to follow up?" And I'm still so pleased that the United States was there in a leadership position. Because what we saw in Beijing was not just another conference. It really was the beginning of the kind of common effort across all kinds of national and other lines that can lead to better and brighter futures for girls and women. But, of course, whether it does or not will rest on the shoulders of women and men like us all over the world.

I'm delighted Representative Frazer could be here with us, and I know Carolyn Maloney was planning to come. I don't know that there's any other member of Congress who's here, but I want to acknowledge those who are interested in these issues because they are part of our partnership.

Women's issues are finally being recognized as not only issues that affect women, but that affect the growth and potential of all of our societies. And I am heartened by what I see happening among Americans who have held briefings and workshops and strategy sessions all designed to try to discuss ways of implementing the platform for action. You've heard today from Marjorie Margolis Mevhinski and Geraldine Ferraro. I know you've had break-out sessions, and we're trying to collect all of your ideas and suggestions for moving the Beijing agenda where it should be -- to the front of our minds.

I think that the President's decision to create the interagency council and charge it with implementing the platform for action at the federal level sets an example of what we should expect. And I'm very pleased that that council has been up and running. But I believe that most of the success of what we can

look back at in years to come, flowing from Beijing, depends upon the work that each of us does in our own sphere of influence.

If one thinks about the Nairobi conference 10 years ago and how domestic violence was for the first time recognized as an international incident that had to be paid attention to and that we all had to work on, that was really a first and it was only after a great deal of discussion and some controversy. Well, there wasn't any one place in the world charged with doing something about domestic violence. It was really grassroots women and men all over the world who began to recognize that they could talk about this issue and try to do something about it.

So we began to see an upsurge of interest in domestic violence and see shelters and stronger laws culminating in our own crime bill, which has a domestic violence against women act. And then, in other places around the world, violence in the home against women was for the first time seen as a crime. When I was in Pakistan, I saw that they were setting up police stations so that women who suffered domestic abuse could go to police stations where women were in charge to talk about the abuse they suffered and much else that has occurred. So it was in communities, it was among neighbors, it was local legislators, it was people like us saying "This is an issue we want to move on!"

And so each of you, in effect, is the Beijing Conference. You are the platform for action. What you do, what you care about, what you speak about, how you engage in the discussions in your own communities and at the state and national levels will determine, in our own country, whether or not Beijing is just another conference, or as we hope it could be -- a real stepping-off point for a lot of other changes.

I am convinced that the opportunities for women to take these kind of leadership positions are more prevalent and more important than ever. I also believe that, as with any period of change, there is a price to pay for putting yourself out, talking about issues that are not universally popular. But I think that it is critical that we have a mass of people who share the belief all of us in this room have about making sure that every boy and girl is loved and cared for equally from birth, that opportunities for education and health care and economic progress are available to all young men and women, that mothers and fathers have a role and responsibility in the upbringing of their children, that women have the chance to be full participants in the political activities of their societies.

Some of that we take for granted here. We have to inspire our own people once again to realize the blessings we have. We have to be sure women in this country vote. They have the suffrage. That's not the case still in other parts of the world. We have to make sure that the laws on the books are enforced and not ignored when domestic violence breaks out or equal pay for

equal work is denied. But other parts of the world don't even have that kind of legal infrastructure.

So, there are things for us to do here at home as well as in partnership with women around the world. Someone who knows a great deal about both of those spheres, here and abroad, is a woman I want to introduce to you. She literally just flew in from Africa. She is, I think, awfully brave to be here at all, standing about to talk, but she is going to be leaving as soon as she finishes and try to catch up with her time zones. But she has been such a remarkable representative of our country.

In the United Nations, Madeline Albright has been a strong, clear voice on behalf of human rights, on behalf of America's position of leadership in this world, and on behalf of -- particularly appropriate for what we are talking about today -- the role that women can and should play in the United Nations and in the political lives of all of our countries. She also was the chair of our delegation to Beijing, and it was such a great pleasure working with her in that capacity and essential, not only for the American presence in Beijing, but also for the organization of the conference as well, because of her strong voice in the United Nations. So, may I now present to you the Ambassador to the United Nations, Madeline Albright.

[MADELINE ALBRIGHT SPEAKS]

MRS. CLINTON: . . . If I could just ask you to be seated, and you'll see why I need you to be seated, because now I would like the members of our delegation to stand. And I would like that to happen because I want all of us -- you probably know all the members of the delegation -- but I would like personally to recognize them one more time. So, everyone that was a member of the official delegation, please stand.

I hope that I will have a chance to greet each of you and thank each of you in the receiving line in the Blue Room, and I welcome all of you to attend the reception in the State Dining Room.

But mostly, I want to thank you again for being a part of this and for sharing a lot of our hopes and dreams about what is possible if we are able to work together and put aside the horrific differences such as ethnicity in Rwanda or differences in ideology and partisan position here in the United States to seek common ground for all people, but particularly to seek common ground that recognizes and elevates the status of women, now and into the future. So, thank you very much and I look forward to seeing you.

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