

2/10/97 Working Mom's  
Magazine, E:Room

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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
AT LUNCHEON FOR WORKING MOTHERS MAGAZINE

The East Room

12:45 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: I want to welcome all of you and tell you how pleased we are to have you here. There will be a program after lunch, but for now, just enjoy the lunch and have a chance to talk with each other. And I'm so grateful for this opportunity to have you all here. (Applause.)

Well, thank you again for joining us for this luncheon. I particularly want to thank those who are responsible for us being able to have this time together. Working Mothers Magazine has been a very important source of information, support, comfort for many working mothers, and you'll hear in a little while from the editor in chief, Judsen Culbreth. And I wanted to also introduce and thank Jay McDonald, who is the CEO of McDonald Communications which owns Working Mothers and Working Women and Ms Magazine. And their deciding to honor women who work both in the home and outside the home has been a real breakthrough, and we're delighted that so many of the honorees could join us.

I also want to thank Betsy Myers, of the White House Office on Women and Women's Affairs, for helping to organize this. And I also want to thank the magazine for working so closely with Betsy and others in the administration on a number of issues that are important, we think, to working parents. Many of those initiatives have been supported by this magazine, including advocating for family friendly workplaces, and the Family and Medical Leave Act, and increased access to affordable and quality child care, and retirement equity, and breaking the glass ceiling, and issues as were discussing at our table concerning children's education and development and health and well-being.

So this is a meeting of minds of many people who have worked on issues of importance to parents, with particular attention to the challenges faced by women who work in the home and outside the home.

I have, in the last four years, had the privilege of speaking with many working mothers around the country -- in Atlanta, and Santa Fe, and Boston, and Chicago, and Pittsburgh, and Los Vegas, and Denver, and many other cities. Their names are not public, as many of you are because of your success and position in the world of work, but they often balance gracefully the challenges of their daily duties. And they have been and have become a driving force in our country, politically, socially, and economically, as we struggle to determine how we're going to promote stronger families, encourage productivity in the workplace, and achieve a greater sense of balance in our personal and collective lives.

I invited some of the women who I have met around the country to join us in this luncheon because each of them represents millions of other women -- women who won't be invited to the White House, but who I wish could be because I want all women, particularly working women who feel at the end of the day, as I often used to feel and still do, that I just can't get anything else done. And yet, keep going and get up and do it again. And I'd like to just take a minute to introduce these women whom I've invited.

Tina Garcia is a properties management company owner in Virginia. I met her at a discussion in Silver Spring. She grew up on welfare, was a single mother for eight years. She couldn't afford child care, so she improvised by literally working around the school schedule and bringing her children to work when school was out. She also did something that I hope more and more women will be encouraged to do and that we help them do, and that is she shared duties with another single mother who didn't drive. She created a village; she created a mutually supportive network. Tina would leave her children with that woman and in return run errands and do grocery shopping for her. Despite all of the obstacles that she faced, she was determined to succeed, and she has.

And Tina, will you just stand up for a minute and let me introduce you to our audience. (Applause.)

I have thought a lot about the next woman whom I met also in Silver Spring. Pamela Kiger is a single mother of three. She lives in Maryland. She holds two jobs, one as an administrative assistant during the day, and the second working as a caterer several nights a week. She wants her children to have the chance to go to college, but most of her salary goes to rent and child care costs. If it were not for her teenage daughter who looks after the two younger children while Pam works at night, she doesn't know what she would do.

She also regrets very much that her work schedule prevents her from attending school functions or even meeting with her children's teachers. She doesn't get time off to do tasks like that. And she, I remember, said, you know, parents should have the option of influencing their children in school, but I don't have that.

I think often about Pam. I saw her today when she came to this lunch and asked her how her children were doing, particularly that teenage daughter who does so much to help her. And she told me they were doing well and she's hoping that they'll be able to scrape the money

together so that her daughter can go to college as she deserves to do.

Pamela, where are you? Will you stand up? (Applause.)

Beatrice Rudder broke the glass ceiling when she became the first woman firefighter in the District of Columbia, and she was recently promoted to battalion chief. She's also pursuing a master's degree and she spends every minute that she can with her eight year old son. She worries, though, as many of us do, about being in the sandwich generation, and she will soon be facing the costs of college tuition for her son, as well as helping to care for her aging parents.

When we talk about working mothers it's important, I think, for all of us in our mind not just to think about the children we care for, but also about our older parents as well. And, Beatrice, will you stand, please? (Applause.)

Now, Lisa Thomas is somebody I met in Pittsburgh, and she drove all the way to be here today. She got time off from work. She's a single mother of four children, and she came up with an innovative way to care for her own children, by working as a teacher at a child care center that gives her a discount. She earns \$6 an hour, works five days a week, relies on the state of Pennsylvania to help her cover the costs of her children's health care, dental costs, and provide food stamps for them. Her health care benefits for her, personally, are provided through her employer.

And I think it's important for all of us as we change the way our government works to keep not just the abstract statistics in mind, but the real people. Lisa is working as hard as she knows how to work and is doing the best she can for her children and she needs to know that there are those of us who want her to succeed and want her children to succeed.

So, Lisa, would you stand, too? (Applause.)

You know, the concerns of Tina and Pam and Beatrice and Lisa are the same all over our country -- how do we get enough time, how do we deal with the challenges that we face in the workplace, how do we make sure that women are paid what they deserve to be paid. The statistics are still pretty daunting -- that four out of five Americans women work full-time, many out of economic necessity, and nearly 75 percent of working women earn less than \$25,000 a year. Women still earn about 72 cents to a man's dollar, and even less as they age.

Child care can cost between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year. That means, for a single mother working on the minimum wage, nearly half of her annual income will be taken up by child care. And 10 million children still lack health insurance.

Now, these issues that are talked about in Working Mothers Magazine and talked about among all of us are real issues on people's minds and need to be part of our political debate. Some of you may recall that during the last presidential campaign some of these issues were described by commentators as the feminization of politics. Well, that's an unfortunate term, as I have said before, because after all, I think most fathers also worry about whether their children

are in safe, dependable, affordable child care. Most men, as well as women, want to be able to take time off when a family member is gravely ill. And most sons want to ensure that their elderly parents have health care coverage in the later stages of their own life.

Instead of the feminization of politics, I prefer to think of this phenomenon as the humanization of politics. And what we have seen being played out in the political arena is what we have seen being played out in our own lives. The gender gap, which we heard a lot about, is simply a measure of how women who are, after all, experts on the hazards and vicissitudes of life, vote their self-interest and their values.

So I think that we should begin to value the concerns that we bring not only to the public arena, but the marketplace as well, and start thinking about how to create the balance in our lives and in our society that will enable working mothers, such as the ones we honor today and the millions who will never be honored, to feel that they can succeed both at home and at work.

For those of you who are in politics and cover politics, we've always heard about real politic, which describes the balance of power among nations. But I think what we're hearing about now is real life politic, how do we create the right balance in our own lives and in our larger collective life. And regardless of political affiliation or economic standing, we all have a stake in making sure that balance works, so that women are able to make the choices that are right for them at the various stages of their life.

We honor some women today who have clearly shown that they know how to strike that balance, but behind every smile you will see you can imagine there's been a lot of sleepless nights, a lot of juggling, a lot of challenges that have been balanced as best as any of us could.

And also, I wanted to be sure to bring the four women who I highlighted today because those of us in this room, and particularly those of us being honored, are very lucky, indeed. We have had supportive families, good educations, being in the right place at the right time, a lot of hard work, and can afford many of the aids that enable us to keep some sane balance in our own lives. That is not the case for millions and millions of other women.

So as we honor those who will be here today, I think if we really want to do working mothers honor we should think about ways we can help every woman be successful at home and at work.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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