

4/29/97 Univ. Louisville

**PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION**

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE
TRANSCRIPT**

Thank you Elizabeth, and good luck with your speech, and your election. I'm delighted to have heard that you're on both the academic and service honor rolls because I intend today, to talk about the importance of service, and I'm very pleased, that you have already understood that importance. Dr. Schumaker, It's a pleasure to be here, at this University, and to take part in the day long activities planned for the Authors' Forum. And thank you also, Professor Hocksworth, for your participation today.

It is always a pleasure for me to be in Louisville, and to have the feeling I get whenever I visit this city, of the enthusiasm and energy that is really the hallmark of what has been happening here for a number of years. I'm also pleased that this University is aware, not only of its educational mission, but also its role in the community and its support for many efforts that not only build a stronger University, but a stronger community as well.

One of those efforts is citizen service. And, in my book, which Elizabeth mentioned, I write about how childhood and service, in my view, go hand in hand. And how, as we look at our democracy, the importance of individuals understanding their connections with one another, and being bound together, in a mutually supportive web of service, is essential to the kind of country we have always enjoyed, as we look into the future.

I can remember, very well, as a young child, my earliest experiences of being a volunteer. I was trying to remember the exact date, which I no longer can, I have neither short nor long term memory any longer. But, I think it must have been in 1956, because I believe it was around the time of an Olympics. And, my friends and I were just entranced by the Olympics, and we decided we would have our own neighborhood Olympics. And in talking about it with my mother, she suggested that perhaps we could use it as a way to raise money for a local charity.

We were 9, 10 and 11, my brothers were younger, we hadn't really ever thought about doing something for a charity before. But, my mother explained how there were lots of people who didn't have the advantages we had. And, although we could have a very good time with our pretend Olympics, we could also be doing something for somebody else.

So, indeed, that's what we did. And, somewhere, buried in mountains of files and pictures and memorabilia, there's a photograph from our local newspaper, of a group of us, standing, holding a paper bag, filled with pennies and nickels, and dimes, and quarters, that we were giving to the local representative of the charity. With my luck, I'm sure that will show up as some kind of conspiracy that I was planning back then. But, I am grateful for that early lesson, and I'm also grateful for the role that my school and my church played, along with my family, in encouraging me and my friends to

think about service from our very earliest days.

The church was particularly important because it taught the ethic of caring about someone else on the basis of an ethical and religious and moral obligation. And, I think for many of us, that is still the driving force. But, I also believe that there is the extra, added element, that we have really come to appreciate in the United States, and which has been a hallmark of our democracy going back, really to the beginning of the 19th century. And that is the way voluntary activities and associations among free people can help create what we call civil society. That space, that huge space that we fill in our lives between individual activity, and governmental or collective activity. It's what we do when we help each other out around our neighborhood or when we belong to a civic group, or a scouting organization, or when we have some kind of project that we want to enlist people with, or when we are in little leagues, or bowling leagues, or whatever it is that brings people together to work on some common effort or goal. For pleasure, for the good of the community, just to make life a little better as we define it.

I have seen over the years, what service can mean to individual citizens, but I've also seen how important it is to the fabric of our democracy. Now, whether it is individual activity, which I know so many of you in this theater participate in, or whether it's through some organized activity, this University and this community have certainly stressed service. Later today, I will be with the mayor as we announce those people who will be going to the Service Summit in Philadelphia that the President is hosting, starting on Sunday. But at this University, I know there are law students like those participating in the Samuel L. Greenbaum Service Program who provide pro bono services as part of their legal training. There are students at the Kent School who do free health screenings in rural areas. There are students who have joined Americorps, the federal government's service program.

All across Kentucky, there are citizens of all ages participating and by doing so, I believe, helping America live up to the image that was first portrayed of it, many years ago, when Alexis de Toqueville toured our country. He was struck by the spirit of service that seemed to permeate American society. And I have been struck by it again and again as I travel around the world and I reflect on the American experience and that of other democracies.

In the last several years, I have traveled on behalf of the United States, to every continent. In Mongolia, I saw a country where nearly a century of domination and oppression at the hands of a dictatorship and communism, could not, in the end, suppress the popular will for self-expression and self-rule. But I also saw a people coming out of that century of domination, who did not know how they were going to help themselves and their neighbors.

I spent last fourth of July in Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic, where not so long ago, through the Velvet Revolution, citizens overcame decades of communist rule. And it helped to pave the way for a newly democratic central Europe. Again, I

saw people who had struggled for freedom, who had always believed that they would eventually triumph, now working out, 'What is the role of the private sector? What is the role of the public sector? How do we create the kind of society that will guarantee democratic values continue to flourish?'

Recently, in Africa, I visited six nations that have undergone a political, economic and social sea change in the last decade. They have done so, in part, by the example of the United States. Although many people in our country seem not to know, or not to care what is happening in African nations as they struggle to throw off the yolk of tyranny and oppression, apartheid, and all of the other problems that have plagued them for decades. It's a very important story for America, because just as I have seen in South Asia or South America, when I meet with groups of students like you, and their faculties and administration from universities, like I did just a few weeks ago at the University of Capetown, what I hear quoted back to me are the words of our founding fathers and patriots. What I hear being asked in questions is 'How do you make this democracy work?'

And what I'm increasingly talking about, as I travel around the world, is the significance of people who care about democracy understanding that it is not just enough to have a democratic government where you have free and independent elections, and an independent judiciary, and a functioning legislature, and a free press, that is not enough. And it is not just enough to have a private marketplace that encourages entrepreneurialism, and freedom to work and seek one's fortune, and to do the best one can on ones own. That yes, those are two of the pillars of democratic, prosperous freedom. But without this glue that hold it together, which emileorates difficulties that come from government or the market, being too powerful, becoming too intrusive, whatever the challenges might be, the balance of power that our founding fathers and documents foresaw, between the various parts of our government, has largely been balanced over time, in the middle, between the powerful forces of government and the private market has been this great sea of individual energy and association, and caring about the quality of our lives together.

So, when I look at the zeal for freedom that I see bursting out around our globe, I am in awe that people who have undergone torture and exile, who have seen their friends, their neighbors, their family members assassinated for political purposes, have emerged from that with a commitment for the kind of ideals that we take for granted here at home. And I am also amazed, when I see a country like South Africa, which endured decades of apartheid, oppression, and violence, deciding that the route to their future lies not in vengeance and bitterness, but instead, through truth and reconciliation. And what is it that will sustain the effort that they have embarked upon to create a climate in which individuals will learn, not to forget their past, but to move beyond and even to forgive one another. That is rooted in the personal experiences, the religious beliefs, the things that do not have a value in the marketplace, that cannot be legislated, but which must come from those habits of the heart, that de Toqueville talked about as truly marking the American experience.

Now, as many of you know, the President has called for this Summit for America's Future which begins in Philadelphia, which is appropriate, because that is where America began. He will be joined by former Presidents Bush and Carter, along with the Summit co-chairs, General Colin Powell, former Secretary Henry Cisneros, and Lynda Johnson Robb. For three days, people will come together from Louisville, and around the country, to discuss the importance of volunteer activity and to make a particular focus on what we need to do as volunteers, and in service, to help families and children. This Summit comes at a critical moment for us here in America, because we have seen our stated ideals triumph around the world. We can look around the globe and still see countries beset by failed ideologies like communism or age-old tyrannies and dictatorships, but the world has never been more free. And I would argue, in large measure, because of American leadership over the past century.

And yet we also know we have new challenges. We live in an information age which hold out unprecedented opportunities for peace and prosperity, but also new challenges, new problems that we are going to have to cope with. Many people feel the strains of living in this very complex, fast paced age. We see growing global competition which makes us wonder, will we be able to find our place in the world of work? We see stress in families as people attempt to change and redefine the roles they had inherited. And we see a decline in volunteer activity, a drop-off in voting, and other indications that Americans feel less able and less willing to participate in what makes our democracy as stable as it is.

We have to look at ourselves, as Americans, and try to understand what we can do to try and rekindle those habits of the heart, that spirit of service. And so the President has called on us to spark a renewed sense of national obligation, a new sense of duty.

There are many ways of being a citizen, as many ways as there are people in this theater. Some people feel that they don't have the time, don't have the energy, don't have the commitment that it takes. But there is something that everyone can do. As Martin Luther King once said, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve." At the Summit, Americans will be asked to think about how we can do one of the following things to help families, and particularly to help our neediest children: First, we'll be asked to make sure that every child has an ongoing relationship with a caring adult. Whether that is a mentor, a tutor, a teacher, a coach, a preacher, a neighbor; somebody who, if a child does not have that relationship with his or her family, can be there to encourage and support that child.

I've spoken with so many people who came out of very difficult circumstances, and you sometimes wonder, 'What made the difference?' Why, even in the same family, facing poverty or abuse, or violence, why did one young person choose a productive path that led to a successful life, and why did one other give up or commit some act of violence, or just feel so alienated and so hopeless, that you know their life has so little meaning for them?

In talking with people, and reading research and just thinking about this over the

years, I can often find in the stories of those adults, who as young people struggled to find their way, that person who made a difference. That teacher who cared, that relative who stepped in, that small business owner who gave that young person a make-shift job, just to give them a sense that they were important and had a contribution to make.

In my book I talk about my own mother who had a very difficult childhood, but at every step of the way, there was a teacher who knew she didn't have enough money for milk, but who would buy two little cartons of milk, and always say to my mother, 'You know, I bought these two cartons of milk, but now I'm full, would you like it?' Or, the great aunt who would come and take my mother, and show her experiences she never could have had before. Or the woman who, when my mother left her grandparents at the age of thirteen to become a full-time employee, except for the hours she was in school, the woman who employed her and took the time to help her and advise her. So, there's always some adult who intervenes at some point, and that can make all the difference.

Secondly, we will be asked to try and provide safe places for children to learn and to grow. That can mean a lot of different things. It can, and I think should mean opening more schools after school and even on weekends and during the summer. We have all these facilities, yet they are often locked and closed when our children need them most. Most young adults, preadolescents between the ages of about nine and fourteen get into trouble between the time they leave school and the time their parents come home from work. They need someplace where they're given adult supervision and positive activities to be engaged in. We need more recreational activities, but that means adults have to be willing to give their time to be involved with children.

Thirdly, we want to promote healthy lifestyles for children. That can't be left just to health professionals, doctors and nurses and others. All of us can do some volunteer work, can be involved in trying to give guidance to young mothers and fathers. A lot of what we need to do is pretty common sense, basic, low cost, providing some caring adult, some mentoring mother or grandmother, or father or grandfather to work with a young mother, a young father, to help them understand how they can raise their own child.

We also need to provide young people with marketable skills through education and training. And there are so many examples of that around the country. Today is an example of taking children to work, giving children the feeling that they are part of the larger society, that they are valued. Businesses can provide internships and part-time and summer jobs, all of us can look for ways to make sure that our schools are preparing our children for the future.

And, finally, the Summit will ask us to expand opportunities for all children to give back to their communities, to be involved, to learn the value of citizen service and by learning that value, to understand how democracy really works. Because when it is all said and done, democracy requires an enormous amount of trust. We put our fates in

the hands of total strangers. People who raise their hands at city councils and legislatures, and congresses, people who go in and vote in the booth next to you. We have to trust one another, and we have to understand the importance of helping one another in order for a democracy to flourish. Without that trust, without that commitment to service, democracy is planted in very shallow ground.

So, I hope that this Summit, which we will be reading about, and watching on television starting on Sunday, when it issues its call to service, that that call does not go unanswered. That instead, each of us tries to say to ourselves, 'What can I do to make a difference in the life of somebody else?' And of course the beauty of service is, as anyone who has ever served knows, that really the dirty little secret is, you get a lot more than you give. When you sit there tutoring that child or adult, helping them to achieve literacy, the feeling you get is absolutely indescribable. When you work with your neighbors to clean up a river bank or to get people involved in some other environmental effort, you're helping yourself, and your family, and you know it. When you work with young people or old people, whatever you choose to do, you're also growing and enhancing your own life.

So I'm hopeful that through actions large and small, public and private, we can build not only a stronger community, but a stronger democracy. And I think that if we can have that as one of our goals, as we move toward the 21st century, that the future of American democracy is safer than ever. Thank you very much.