

Remarks at Shanghai Girls School,  
Shanghai, China  
6/30/98

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

**First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton**  
**Remarks at the Shanghai No. 3 Girls School**  
**Shanghai, China**

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**Monday, June 30, 1998**

Thank you very much for your warm welcome and the invitation to visit your school. I have already been with your principal and the Vice Mayor in some of the classrooms to see some of the art work that all of you do and to talk about music with some of the students and even to see some of the students on the Internet. So, I have a bit of an idea about the wide variety of activities and interests that you pursue after you have done your studies.

I wanted to come here to be able to see for myself what is happening in the lives of young women here in Shanghai, and particularly young women such as yourselves, who attend such a difficult and demanding school. Because I agree with your principal that it is essential that as many young people as possible be given the very best available education. And that is particularly true for young women.

When I was in the classroom with some of your classmates, talking about music, one young woman asked me what I thought about young women here in China, because she knew that I had traveled in many places around the world, and when I travel, I try to make time for meetings with women and particularly to visit with young people. Because, although we have seen many, many advances in the world, in terms of opportunities for women and girls, there is no argument that women and girls in most of the world still are not given equal opportunities to pursue education, to pursue their dreams, to make choices for their own lives, and I believe strongly that it is in every country's interest – my country, your country, every country around the world that we do everything we can to make sure young girls are treated equally and given opportunities so that each young girl can make the best choices for her life. So I wanted to come to this school to have a chance to learn more about the lives of young women here in Shanghai and particularly young women such as yourselves who have entered into this school's curriculum with all of its demands because of interests that you have that you are pursuing, because I would like to be able to make clear to everyone that the opportunities that are available in a school such as this or in the best schools in my country for young girls should be available to all young girls everywhere. I also want to say just a word about the important visit that my husband is making to your country. Because when my husband decided to come to China, he wanted not only to meet with government officials in Beijing, but, as much as possible, to see people and talk to them about what is on their minds. He was just on a radio program where listeners called in and asked him questions, and earlier this morning he and I met with citizens of Shanghai in a discussion at your beautiful new library. In both of those instances and in the other occasions that we have had in a village outside Xi'an, in Beijing, here in Shanghai, we have been struck by the great changes that have occurred in China in the last several years, and by the way, the many ways that people's lives have improved. And we've had an opportunity to talk with and learn about these changes from older people, people who are doing all kinds of work to help build a very strong economy and to make China the kind of country you wish it to be in the next century.

But we haven't had as much opportunity to speak to young people until the President was able to speak at Peking University to a crowd of students and faculty and they were then able to ask him questions. Today, I would like also to give you the opportunity to ask me

questions and I may have a few questions to ask in return. Because we hope through this visit of the President and all of us who are traveling with him, that we will learn more about what is happening in China in the lives of people of all ages, and through our visit be able to communicate that back to Americans so that Americans will know more about what is happening with the Chinese people and, through opportunities such as this, we hope that the Chinese people will learn more about how Americans see the world and what we think about the future. So in a moment I will welcome your questions, because I would like the opportunity to hear what is on your minds. I think that one of the great results that we hope will come from this visit that my husband is making is that more people in both of our countries will understand more about the other country, and that we will see how much we do have in common, how many of the same issues we face, and where we have differences, that we will discuss those differences and understand ways that we can work together. So it is a great honor for me to be here to be part of this visit that the President is making, but it is a special pleasure for me to be here in this school. Because I know how hard you work, how competitive this school is, how difficult the curriculum is, and I admire you for your commitment to your studies and your understanding about how critical it is that education will open doors to you in the future. So I congratulate you on your hard work. I'm very pleased to see such a beautiful school building and grounds, but I'm especially appreciative of the chance to talk with those of you who are students here. So with that, Madame Principal, what I would like to do is to hear from the students and have an opportunity to answer their questions. [Applause]

STUDENT: Mrs. Clinton, I'd like to ask a question. You may have already heard something about Shanghai in the United States. Now you have seen Shanghai with your own eyes and is it the same as you thought before, and what impressed you most during your visit to China? Thank you.

FIRST LADY: Well, it will be quite some time before I digest everything that I have seen and heard and learned in the few days we have been here. But one image that will forever stay in my mind is what I saw in Shanghai last night as my husband and I drove in from the airport. I don't know if those of you who live here everyday have gotten used to the skyline and the extraordinary beauty of the city and the variety of the architecture that one sees, but it is a stunning and impressive sight to come to Shanghai for the first time especially at night as we did yesterday. I had been told that there is more construction occurring in Shanghai than in any place in the world, and that of all those great big giant cranes that tower over your skyline, I'd been told that 20% of all the giant cranes in the world are in Shanghai. I believe that based on what I have seen. So my first, initial impression was one of a vibrant, vivid, growing, exciting city. And then today, during the day, as we've been able to drive along the streets, as we went to the new library and toured it with your Mayor; as I went to the very impressive new children's medical center with the Vice Mayor, and toured that; as I visited a center for the retraining of women who have lost their jobs because of the economic transformation occurring here; as I went to a wonderful restaurant in an old historic section of Shanghai - everything that I have seen in just the very short time I have been here has been impressive to me. Because I have seen a place that is dynamic and is growing and is oriented toward the future, and I think that that is the kind of place that will be prepared for the challenges and changes of the next century. You know, in the world in which we live today, there is no certainty other than change because when you look around we see how much is changing all of the time. And for a city or a country or a person to be able to be prosperous and successful in the next century, I believe you must be flexible and adaptable to the

changes that will occur, and it appears to me that Shanghai is well prepared for that kind of century, so I was very impressed by what I have seen so far. [Applause]

STUDENT: Hello, Mrs. Clinton. My mother has read the book you wrote entitled "It Takes a Village." It's about education. She wanted me to ask you, as a mother, what do you think is the most important to teach your daughter? And what kind of a person do you expect your daughter to be? Thank you.

FIRST LADY: That's a very important question for all of us, because there isn't any more important job in the world than taking care of and preparing the next generation. You can have many, many jobs. You can be a physician like the Vice Mayor, or a principal like your principal, or a lawyer like I am, but I think the most important task is how you raise your children, or other children on whom you have an influence. And certainly you have a special responsibility when it comes to education. So I would answer your mother in two ways. I think there are certain values that you must teach your child that have nothing to do with book learning, values that are the kind of person your child will become, because you can be a very well-educated person, a very successful person, a very rich person in material wealth, but not be a person of value, not be a person of character, so many of the lessons that you must teach when your child is young have to do with the kind of person your child will be: will your child be kind, will your child be empathetic, in other words, sensitive to the needs and wants of other people? Will your child be confident, and able to face whatever challenges and disappointments will come in your life because all of us face those? So those are the kinds of things you must teach a child that don't have anything to do with what you learn in school, but the kind of person you will become. And then I think you have an obligation to instill in your child a love of learning, a love of education and that starts at a very early age. I was speaking with your classmates in the music discussion about how we now know the brain develops in the first three years of life. If you have a baby from the very beginning of that baby's life, and you speak to that baby, you read to that baby, you sing to that baby, you are not only building a warm relationship with your baby, you are actually building more brain cells in your baby's brain, and therefore, better preparing your baby for the kind of learning that you do here in school. And I think once a child is born, you have an obligation to help instill in that child a love of learning and to build a strong, positive attitude toward education, and then once a child goes to school, you must work with the teachers, you must help the child with homework, you must encourage the child. Now many parents do that, but some parents either don't know how to do that, or cannot do that, so it's important that other adults try to help children learn to love learning so that they can help the family and help the child be successful. And that is what my husband and I have tried to do with our daughter, both in the kind of learning about life, and then the learning in the education and schooling that she has had, and it is something that we believe in very strongly, that is very important to every child, boy or girl. And that is one of the arguments that I made in my book which your mother read. And would you thank your mother for reading my book. I appreciate that very much. [Applause] Thank you.

STUDENT: You have mentioned something about girls' schools. Since we are all girls' school students, we'd like very much to know what do you think are the advantages of a girls' school. Thank you.

FIRST LADY: I went to a girls' college. I did not go to a girls' school, I went to a very large high school with boys and girls, but then when I reached university age, I went to Wellesley College, outside of Boston, Massachusetts, which is a well-known women's

college, a girls' college in our country. And I am very happy that I did that. I found the atmosphere very conducive to learning, and I think it also true in the younger years as well. Here in your school, I met the young woman who is the leader of your school, the chair of your school. As young women, you have all the responsibilities in the school. You are the ones who have to make the decisions, you are the ones who are the student leaders, and I believe that instills in young women a sense of confidence about what they are able to do when they go out into the world. So I think that girls' schools are a very good opportunity for many young women, and I believe that they should be available as an option for young women if that is what they choose. Now my own daughter did not want to go to a girls' college and did not want to go to a girls' school. She had a different attitude and a different experience. So she went to a co-educational high school, and now she is at Stanford University, which is a large co-educational university. So she made a different choice, despite my encouragement of her to look at my own college. So I think it's an individual matter. Some young women are very successful in co-educational settings, and others like many of you, are very successful in this setting. I believe there should be a choice so that young women can decide what they think is best for them, so I'm very much in favor of having available girls' schools like this, and even girls' colleges like the one I attended. Thank you. [Applause]

STUDENT: Mrs. Clinton, we're all very interested to know if you will run for President, and do you think American people will have a woman President someday in the near future? Thank you.

FIRST LADY: Well, I will not run for President, but I do hope that a woman will run and be elected President sometime in the early part of the next century. I hope that I am still alive when we have a woman President, so that if I agree with her politically I can vote for her. Now if I do not agree with her politically, I will not vote for her, even if she is a woman, but I will be very proud that she is running for the President. And I think that it is important that we do everything we can to create opportunities for women in our political systems, so that I hope sometime in the next century, there will be a meeting between the woman president of the United States and the woman president of China. [Laughter; applause]

STUDENT: Thank you, very much.

FIRST LADY: Perhaps one of you will be in that position and I will be glad to read about that when that occurs.

STUDENT: Hello, Mrs. Clinton. I would like to ask what do the American students know about China? For example, Chinese characters, Chinese paintings, Chinese customs, and Chinese culture.

FIRST LADY: I don't know that the average student, the typical American student, knows very much and that is one of the reasons my husband wanted to make this trip, so that through our American media we could show to more Americans, particularly young Americans, more about Chinese culture and Chinese life so that more Americans would have a better understanding of China. I have met with a number of students, American students, who are studying here in China and they are very enthusiastic about what they are learning. In fact, the daughter of our American Ambassador is studying Chinese and has been studying Chinese for two years now, and loves Chinese culture, the Chinese language. So I am hoping that we will have more exchanges with more American students coming here to China to

study and more Chinese students going to America so that more American students can have first-hand relationships and friendships with young people from China, because I think it is very important that we understand each other better, and that we appreciate each other more. And I think as one of the panelists in our panel discussion this morning said, a woman novelist from Shanghai, it's important that we have more access to the books that are published here, that they be translated into English, that we have more exhibitions of art, that there be more exchanges of artists and musicians coming between our two countries, because everything we do to present the history, the culture, the ideas of China to America, I am convinced will enable more Americans to understand more about the choices that China is making and the kind of future that you are building so I hope that we will [inaudible]

The question you asked, let me answer by saying many more Americans do know more. Now of course, we have many Chinese-Americans living in the United States and they have been extraordinarily successful contributors to the building of the United States. So that many people in our country know Chinese-Americans and that is one way to further our understanding but I would like to see some of the other things happen that I just mentioned. Thank you. [Applause]

STUDENT: [Inaudible]

FIRST LADY: Yes to both. I like Chinese food very much and I've had some excellent Chinese food since we have been here. I just came from a very delicious lunch, and I learned many years ago to use chopsticks because even as a student I used to go and eat a lot of Chinese food, so I feel very much at home eating Chinese food. I'm not an expert with chopsticks, but I can get most of the food into my mouth. [Applause] Thank you.

STUDENT: [Inaudible]

FIRST LADY: You know, I am very aware of the generation gap, and I assume many of you are as well because every generation does things differently from their parents, and although those of us who are parents are sometimes surprised by those differences, that is what we did to our parents so that it is part of how people change over time, and yet, I think it is also very important, as I understand from my friends who are Chinese-Americans that the family in China always stresses the importance of the continuing relationship from generation to generation and the value that one can obtain from honoring those who are older. So although there will always be a generation gap, it can either be a small gap which is natural as people change over time because for example, I am not by any means an expert on the computer, my daughter can do really anything on a computer. That is a big gap between the two of us, but I hope that there is not very much of a gap in how we can talk to each other and how we can support each other and that is much more important. So there are things – there will be differences that I will not understand about her generation, but the important things about supporting the family and supporting each other and guiding each other I hope will remain the same no matter what the differences might be in the life that you will lead in the future. So it is always hard for parents to see their children grow up, and it is especially hard I think for parents to see daughters grow up and leave. And when my daughter left to go to Stanford which is all the way across the country, from Washington, she would not have gotten any farther without falling into the Pacific Ocean, it was very hard on her father and me. But at the same time, we were very proud that she was so independent and able to take of herself, and confident about her ability to do her studies so far from home. So it was what we call in English, a "mixed blessing." We're blessed to have a child who could do that, but we were

sorry to have her leave home and be so far away. So that I think is the tension that you always find and I understand your parents' questions, because sometimes it is very hard being a parent and seeing a child you want to be educated and make choices for herself begin to do that, as I'm sure some of you already are. So I hope that if my family and your family are able to keep a strong family bond, even though there is, I believe, inevitably a generation gap between the generations, but understand, especially in today's fast-changing world, how confusing it must be for your parents or parents like my husband and me to see changes that we would never have dreamt of when we were your age. So be gentle about bold hopes, about the changes that you are living through and will be making in the next century. Thank you. [Applause]

STUDENT: [Inaudible]

FIRST LADY: You're right. We've had in the last months very tragic instances of young boys obtaining guns and going through schools and shooting their classmates, even some of their teachers. It has been very disturbing to Americans, very troubling because of the violence that these young men have used. Both my husband and I have spoken about this and we're both very concerned because we think that there are a number of reasons why these young boys, some as young as 11, between about the ages of 11 and 18, would turn to violence and be able to act out their anger and their rage, their feelings that they had inside of them. One of the reasons we believe is that there is a lot of violence in the media in the United States. The average child growing up in the United States watching our television will see something like 20,000 murders on television by the time they're 18 years old. Now for most young people like my daughter and her friends who come from strong families, that come from families that talk to them, this exposure to violence doesn't lead them to violence. But for other young people, for whatever reason, who don't have that same support or who are not given the help that they need as a young person, an exposure to violence begins to wear away at their own sense of reality and also gives them ideas that this is a natural way to solve one's problems and so we are concerned about the amount and level of violence on our television, in our movies, in our music that our children are exposed to. But that, of course, is not the only reason that we have had the problems we've had. Another issue is that there are many, many guns in America. And these young boys have these guns from their own families. In one case, the young boys stole the guns from a grandfather who liked to hunt with the guns and they took them from the grandfather without his knowing and used them. In another instance, the boy had his own gun which he had been given because he wanted very much to have a gun which he said he would use for target practice or for hunting. And my husband has very many concerns about having young people, particularly children, have access to guns, and he has advocated that there be locks on guns that children would not be able to open without an adult who handed him the key or the combination so that even if a child took a gun from his father or his grandfather, he would not be able to use it. Because with so many guns around what would be ordinary schoolboy arguments or fights, the kinds of arguments I would see on the playground when I was a little girl growing up where boys would push each other or they would yell at each other or they would call each other names, maybe even have a fight with each other, if you have access to a gun, what is an ordinary schoolboy fight becomes a potential deadly tragedy because every young boy I know – I have two younger brothers – at some point has some kind of argument or fight with some other boy – that seems to be part of what boys do when they grow up, you know, pushing or shoving or yelling at each other. We expect that, and that passes. But if that boy while he's still angry at his classmate, while he is still disappointed, can go and get a gun instead of using his fists or using his mouth to yell, then you can see how that could lead to a tragedy.

And finally, we think that there is a real problem with the identification of some of our children who need some kind of psychological help or counseling. If a young boy is acting up – I say “boy” because that’s who has committed these crimes, young boys – if a young boy is acting up, threatening people, causing trouble in school, if the school takes its usual step and expels the boy, sends the boy home, that may not be enough, because that’s what happened in the last case. The boy was disruptive, he brought a gun to school, and the school immediately sent him home. He was not supposed to be in school with a gun. But we think more needs to be done. You know that boy should have been probably arrested, he should have been given some kind of psychological evaluation, something should have been done to try to intervene to prevent the tragedy. So we are going to be doing a lot of hard work about this issue in our country in the weeks ahead. My husband and I will have several meetings with experts about this, we’ll look for ways that we can persuade parents to eliminate some of the television violence in their houses. In fact, the President passed a law a few years ago that requires all American television starting next year to have a microchip installed in the television so that parents can program the microchip so that young children cannot turn on the programs that the parents disagree with, that they think are not right for the child to watch. So we hope through a variety of ways we’re going to be able to limit the circumstances in which a child can translate whatever terrible feelings are inside into such a tragedy as the ones we have seen. It is a problem that we are taking very seriously and working very hard on to try to find some solutions for and I hope that we will be successful so that we don’t have any more of these very tragic, violent incidents like the ones we’ve had. Thank you. [Applause]

Now let me thank all of you. Those were excellent questions. I think we should applaud the questioners. Those were excellent questions. [Applause]

I also want to thank the band, I saw the band as I came in and I want to thank those who are behind me, the musical ensemble. And I want to thank all of the teachers and the staff of the school and the students particularly, for this kind invitation. And I hope that we have all learned something and that I certainly have seen first-hand the quality of the students here at this school and I wish all of you a very successful break in school. I understand you’re coming up on a vacation time. And I learned from your chair, the student leader, that some of you will be taking exams in July, and I wish you much success on your exams. Thank you very much. [Applause]

[Remarks outside the building]

Thank you. You have been so patient. I’m sorry that there was not enough room to fit all of you in the auditorium and I thank you so much for being here to greet me and then waiting here so patiently. I am very pleased that I’ve had a chance to visit your school. You have made me feel very welcome and I know that all of you are working very hard, that your studies are demanding, but that you also have time for many activities, sporting, athletic activities, artistic activities and the like, and inside, one of the young women, one of your classmates asked me about girls’ schools, and I said I am very much in favor of there being girls’ schools so that young women like yourselves can choose to attend such a fine school as this. And I want to congratulate you for a making a choice that will be very demanding, that will really push you to excel and I wish all of you much success in your studies, and whatever you choose to do in the future. Because I believe that investing in a girl’s education is one of the best investments any family or country can make. So I am delighted to see what a good

investment this school has with all of you. Thank you for letting me come to see you. Thank you very much.