

YWCA Battered Women's Shelter  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
7/27/98

PHOTOCOPY  
PRESERVATION

First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Remarks at the YWCA Battered Women's Shelter  
July 27, 1998

Thank you Mary. Thank you for being here today, for the example of your courage and your generous spirit and reminding all of us how important it is that we create that community that the mayor referred to. It is such a pleasure to be back in Cincinnati and doing something with the YWCA. This is what I did last time and I am delighted to be here again doing it.

I know that you will have a very special event tonight when this shelter is formally opened and ready to receive the women who will need its services. And I want to thank and congratulate your executive director, Charlene Ventura, who was with me last time and who has continued to demonstrate extraordinary leadership on behalf of the Y, on behalf of women and on behalf of community building. And I want to congratulate you Charlene.

And I am especially pleased to be here with your mayor. You know Mayor Qualls has a national reputation for coming up with common sense solutions to difficult problems and bringing people together to work on behalf of the common good. I personally wish we had more people like her in Washington with that attitude because she has worked hard to improve the lives of the residents of this city. And by doing so, she has given more citizens opportunities for home ownership. She has worked to improve the schools, to promote economic development, and she has always been a powerful voice on behalf of women and on behalf of issues such as domestic violence.

We have come together to celebrate the opening of this shelter. I don't think there is a person here who does not wish that we did not have to be here to celebrate the opening of this shelter. I believe that all of us wish that the problem it represents and the services it provides were not necessary. But unfortunately that is not yet possible for us to say.

This shelter truly is state of the art. Having just taken a tour of it, I am very impressed by the obvious love, commitment and vision that went into creating it. Now you may not know that every ten seconds, a woman is hurt by her spouse, partner or friend. And I have heard that here in Cincinnati, family violence accounts for one-third of all the calls to which the police respond.

Yet in too many communities, unlike Cincinnati, domestic violence is considered a private matter and people look the other way. But the people of Cincinnati, under the leadership of the mayor and the Y and all of you, have refused to turn away. You have recognized the depth of the problem and committed yourself to solving it. You have said that no woman should ever fear for her life in her own home.

Well your priority is our national priority as some of you know. The President for his own personal reasons, going back into his own childhood and the story of his own mother, has been committed to stopping domestic violence. He and all of us fought hard for the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, ensuring that for the first time the federal government

would adopt a comprehensive approach to combating domestic violence and sexual assault.

This bill combined tough new penalties with programs to prosecute offenders and provide services to help women victims of violence. It established a new grant program called the S.T.O.P. Violence Against Women Formula Grants Program. And S.T.O.P. stood for standards, training, officers and prosecutors. And the goal of these grants was to help law enforcement agencies and communities respond better to violent crimes against women.

Today, I think it is fitting that on the occasion of the opening of this amazing shelter, and I am always a little reluctant to say this because I have not been in every shelter in the country, but -- let me put it this way -- there is certainly no better shelter anywhere in our country. And on the occasion of the opening of this shelter, I am pleased to announce at this moment in Washington, the Justice Department is releasing a report on the effectiveness of the S.T.O.P. grants program.

This report, evaluates the S.T.O.P. grants, was written by the Urban Institute for the Department of Justice. And it looks at what is happening in Cincinnati and around the country to change the way we deal with domestic violence. And it will not be a surprise to you, because Cincinnati has been on the forefront, that we are making progress.

For example, forty-two states now set a minimum level of domestic violence training for police recruits -- something they didn't do before. And domestic violence is not only one of the most common calls to police officers; it is one of the most common reasons police officers are injured in the line of duty.

And with the tragic reminder that we all have in our nation of the ways in which our law enforcement officers put their lives on the line to protect all of us -- that we saw at the Capitol -- it is important that our law enforcement officers are well trained. Also importantly, these grants have strengthened grassroots victims services programs, including shelters like this one.

I am very pleased that the YWCA of Cincinnati was the recipient of a \$154,000 S.T.O.P. grant in 1996 and again last year in 1997. And this year it is expected that S.T.O.P. funds will be used to enhance the invaluable work of this new center. I am pleased that overall, under the administration's leadership, we have tripled the federal funding for battered women shelters.

I know when Alice Paul House opened its doors in 1978 it was among the first such shelters in our nation. Now with this new shelter you have nearly tripled the number of women and children who will be protected, who will find safety, and as Mary reminded us, find hope and opportunities as well.

You have created a very cheery place for children, including the play room, the bedrooms and this schoolroom. And I know that all of you who have supported this venture will stay involved with it. From the YWCA to local foundations; from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development to the members of Bethel Baptist Church; from city and state community development funds to the Cincinnati Horticultural Society to the Creative Cottage Quilt Outreach Project, which has made over 100 quilts to cover all the beds in this center; from the largest

donation to the smallest -- you have all made a difference.

As a result, I am seeing progress in our struggle against domestic violence. Non-lethal domestic violence has gone from -- and just listen to these numbers -- in 1993, 1.1 million incidents, down to 840,000 in 1996. Now that is a 23% decline, but that is still way too many. Fatal incidents have dropped from 2,300 in 1993 to 1,800 in 1996 -- a 22% drop. So we are making progress together. We are building that community that the Mayor has talked about and worked so hard to see take place.

But of course much work remains to be done. And I want to encourage all of you to keep doing what you are doing. Because Cincinnati and the YWCA here truly are examples for the rest of the country. And I want to thank the media who are covering this for not revealing the address and location, or giving any identifying characteristics in their coverage, because certainly the anonymity of the women who come here and the anonymity of the location are central to ensuring the safety of every woman and every child who comes through the doors.

But I want to end where I started, by saying that one day we can come back here together to celebrate the closing of this shelter, because the problem which it represented -- domestic violence and abuse, will be a thing of the past. And we will have reached all those who are abusers with the information, the education, the punishment that they need to deter them and prevent them from continuing their abuse. And we will have enabled all women to speak for themselves and protect themselves and their children so that this shelter will be a relic of a past. Now that will take some time, but I hope I am around to see it. I hope that all of us who are here are around to see it.

But in the meantime, it gives me such a great sense of appreciation to know that here in Cincinnati is a place that any woman and any child that needs your help can come and receive it in a setting that honors and respects her dignity and gives her the support she needs.

Thank you all very much.