Millennium – Women VV
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MILLENNIUM EVENING AT THE WHITE HOUSE
WOMEN AS CITIZENS: VITAL VOICES THROUGH THE CENTURY

The East Room

7:35 P.M. EST

MRS. CLINTON: Good evening, and please be seated. Those who are here with us in the East Room in the White House, to everyone who is watching on television or on the Internet, we welcome you here as well.

In 1900, near the end of a lifetime of fighting for women's rights, Susan B. Anthony described her bold vision for the future: The woman of the 20th century will be the peer of man. In education, in art and science, in literature, in the home, the church, the state, everywhere she will be his acknowledged equal. The 20th century will see man and woman working together to make the world better for their having lived. All hail to the 20th century.

Well, Susan B. Anthony's words were prophetic, for in many ways her dreams have been realized. Yet, early in this century the full participation in civic life that women now take for granted was still out of reach. Women were constrained in their rights to own property, testify in court, or file a lawsuit. No woman served on a jury, and by law a woman's husband was assumed to be the guardian of her children. And a woman's wages, for which she often worked long and horrible hours, belonged to her husband.

He, in turn, was legally obliged to support her. In many states, a married woman could not even open a bank account. And even what a woman wore was restricted.

Now, there are many people who look back at that time and thing, my goodness, how could it have ever been. But we know that change occurred, although change was slow and took the work of many women and men. And certainly we also know that women did not have the most fundamental right of citizenship -- namely, the right to vote. My own mother was born before women could vote.

So I'm pleased to join the President in welcoming all of you to the White House for

this Millennium Evening. With our distinguished panelists, we will "honor the past and imagine the future" by listening to the "vital voices of women." We will reflect together on the dramatic changes in the lives of women and all citizens in the 20th century.

Just think of the ideas, the inventions, the social movements that have so dramatically altered our society. Now, many of those movements and ideas we can trace to our own founding, our founding documents: the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. And we can then follow those ideas as they move toward Seneca Falls, where 150 years ago, women struggled to articulate what their rights should be.

From women's struggle to gain the right to vote to gaining the access that we needed in the halls of academia, to pursuing the jobs and business opportunities we were qualified for, to competing on the field of sports, we have seen many breathtaking changes. We've also been helped in our struggle by technological advances like vacuum cleaners and cell phones. We've made strides that, certainly, Susan B. Anthony could never have imagined.

Now, there are clearly far too many topics to cover in only 90 minutes tonight, so we've chosen to concentrate on one of the defining stories of our time: the way women have entered the circle of our democracy and moved America closer to our greatest ideal, that we are all created equal.

Standing here, looking at this audience tonight, I could call the names of nearly all of you who are here that I recognize, women and men who have made a contribution to where we stand here on the brink of a new century, who have struggled over the years to expand the opportunities and enlarge our democratic freedoms. Many of you have mobilized voters; you have worked for electoral change; you've championed issues, you've been advocates. At International Vital Voices conferences I've met other women who have struggled around the globe to bring those same rights and freedoms to the people of their countries.

Whether we know the names of the women who have done these acts because they stand in history, or we see them in the television or the newspaper coverage, we know that for everyone whose name we know there are countless women who are engaged every day in the ordinary, but remarkable, acts of citizenship.

And we will hear from our panelists tonight what it means to be so involved, and how important it is that we continue to build our democracy and keep our freedoms and our rights alive. I'm always moved when I hear the stories of these women. And I think tonight as we honor the National Women's History Month each of us probably has our own stories that we could tell.

This Sixth Millennium Evening at the White House is part of an ongoing series to recognize the words and ideas, the science and scholarship, the innovation and creativity that have shaped our recent history. These evenings are just part of our larger initiative that the White House Millennium Council directs to encourage all Americans to mark this millennium in meaningful and lasting ways, to think themselves about how to honor the past and imagine the

future.

I certainly want to thank the scholars who have gathered with us today. And I want to just highlight a few names of some of the people who are with us: Betty Friedan, Ellie Smeal, Carol Gilligan, Karen Nussbaum, Governor Ann Richards, former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder, Lt. General Claudia Kennedy, Dr. Rita Caldwell. As I said, I could go on and on.

And part of what you so represent for all of us are the very concrete steps that women have taken, and will continue to take. The President's Commission on the Celebration of Women in American History, led by Ann Lewis and Beth Newberger, will be issuing a report that has really tried to summarize many of the advancements that we recognize today. The members of the Commission, I believe, are here, and I just would like to ask them to stand, so that we can thank them for their work in giving us this report. (Applause.)

I also want to express my appreciation to everyone who has helped make this evening possible, especially our co-sponsor, the National Endowment for the Humanities, led by its chair, Bill Farris, and NEH's sponsors, the Howard Gilman Foundation and Sun Microsystems, especially John Leahy, who are responsible for the technology that will enable us to reach millions of people around the world via satellite and the Internet.

I also thank Pioneer New Media Technologies for providing the high-definition TV screens in this room. And I also want to thank the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian for the displays in the Grand Foyer.

Now, we are privileged to have with us this evening three remarkable women scholars whose powerful voices have not only tell the story of who we are as Americans, but who we hope to be as we enter this new millennium. Together, they will help us explore three interconnected themes: women as volunteers and reformers; women's struggle for equal rights; and the practice of citizenship.

Our first speaker, Professor Alice Kessler-Harris, is one of the nation's foremost labor historians and a pioneer in establishing women's studies nationwide. Yet her extraordinary career almost ended before it began. In graduate school she was offered a prestigious fellowship, but when the largely male faculty learned she was pregnant, they revoked the grant.

Now, this is not the Dark Ages we are talking about. Alice's pregnancy, they argued, reflected a lack of seriousness about her pursuit of history. (Laughter.) Now, I think we can all agree, including those nameless faculty members that her seriousness is no longer in question.

Today she is a visiting professor at Columbia University, where she holds a joint appointment in the Institute for Research on Women and Gender and in the history department. She also holds a professorship of history at Rutgers University where she directed the Women's Study program from 1990 to 1995. For almost 10 years, she gave working men and women the chance to earn a college degree by teaching courses at the union headquarters of the UAW's District 65 in New York, a program she

founded with her husband, Bert Silverman.

Tonight, she will talk to us about the vital civic roles that women have played as volunteers and reformers throughout our history. This is a particularly important subject, because without women volunteers and reformers, none of what we celebrate today would have happened in such a timely manner.

I'm also pleased that our second panelist, Professor Nancy Cott, interrupted her warm sabbatical at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences in Palo Alto, California, to join us at the White House tonight. She is the Stanley Woodward Professor of History and American Studies at Yale University, where she has taught since 1975. She has written widely on women's history, editing the 20-volume History of Women in the United States, and contributing to historical documentaries, including the film entitled, "One Woman, One Vote."

Like Alice Kessler-Harris, Nancy Cott and, no doubt, many of the women here tonight, had to struggle to have her work recognized. Early in her career, when she was discussing the publication of one of her books, she was stunned by one publisher's decision not to publish her work. The reason? Interest in women's history and women's issues had peaked.

Well, tonight she will speak to us about one of the enduring stories of our time, which has not yet peaked here or anywhere in the world -- namely, the struggle for equal rights.

Our final panelist, Ruth Simmons, embodies the spirit of citizenship and the power of education to set our dreams and our spirits free. The daughter of sharecroppers, she was one of 11 children born and raised in a small, East Texas town. She credits the resilient spirit of her mother for teaching her more about life than any course she took.

Today, Dr. Simmons is President of Smith College. Recognized as a truly gifted administrator, she served for three years as Vice Provost at Princeton, where she wrote a widely discussed report on race relations on that campus. The recipient of numerous prizes and fellowships, Dr. Simmons was awarded the Centennial Medal from Harvard in 1997. Throughout her life and by her own example, she has propelled many young men and women toward lifetimes of achievement. And tonight, Dr. Simmons will share with us her thoughts about the practice of citizenship.

I want to take just a moment to explain how the rest of this evening will work. A video will introduce each theme, and after each presentation by our scholars, a question will be directed to that particular speaker. After our final panelist, Dr. Simmons, completes her remarks and responds to the question put to her, the President will start off the discussion here, and with those of you on the Internet, moderated by our White House Millennium Council Director, Ellen Lovell.

Now, let us look at the first theme, "Women as Volunteers and Reformers." (Applause.)

(A video is shown.)

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: Mr. President, Mrs. Clinton, my fellow panelists and distinguished guests: I'm delighted to be here this evening to talk about the many ways that women, through their active participation as citizens, have shaped American democracy.

Ever since Americans rebelled against the British monarch to found their own republic and to become citizens instead of subjects, we've envisioned citizenship as a process that involved participation in the community as well as the nation. For many, casting a ballot and engaging in formal political processes have been the measure of citizenship. By these gauges, virtually all women and many men were excluded fromcitizenship in the 19th century and for much of the 20th as well.

With little access to formal politics, women searched for other avenues through which they could exercise the call to active participation in their society. Over the centuries, women from all walks of life have so successfully responded that they have expanded the idea of citizenship, broadening and deepening it by developing innovative and informal modes of participation that aimed to enhance the well-being of all those around them and to influence political decisions as well.

Their activities provide a model for thinking about citizenship in democracy in the next century. Even after they won the national ballot in 1920, women continued to expand the idea of citizenship. Let me give you just three ways that this has happened. First, women's traditional assignment to home and family has provided a model for service to the larger society. Pioneer feminists, like Charlotte Perkins Gilman, believed that love and duty to the home and to motherhood sanctioned, even required, maternal activities in the public realm. As mothers of the world, active female citizens extended their households to clean up corrupt political machines and ensure that every mother could provide for her family.

In the early part of this century, neighborhood women who couldn't afford to feed their families led bread riots and meat boycotts. Around the same time, millions of women organized into hundreds of chapters of the general federation of women's clubs and the National Association of Colored Women. These clubs campaigned against child labor to protect other people's children from the devastating effects of work begun too soon.

Sparked by the vision of the courageous anti-lynching crusader, Ida B. Wells Barnett, African American women fought to protect their sons and brothers from racial hatred. The ideals of home and motherhood extend from the early part of the century into the 1960s and, indeed, into the present. In 1961, thousands of ordinary housewives and mothers joined in a one-day women's strike for peace that called for an end to the arms race, not the human race.

Their feelings echoed those of striking women textile workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts, who, half a century earlier, had tried to send their children to safety, only to be shot down by the bullets of National Guardsmen. Those women, too, had called for bread and roses.

Because women were excluded from most channels of corporate and political power, they developed some special imaginative strategies for exercising citizenship. Being outside formal politics freed women to create alliances across borders of class, race and nation. It freed them as well to imagine a citizenship with more humane dimensions.

Their activities ranged from the YWCA, the Young Women's Christian Association, which in the early 20th century became one of the very few organizations to experiment with black and white leadership coalitions. They include Rose Schneiderman, an immigrant cap maker whose only schooling was in the workplace, who joined with college graduates to create the National Women's Trade Union League.

They stretched across the world. Eleanor Roosevelt, whose education in issues of social justice came from some of the same settlement workers and union members, also learned about the women's peace movement from them. When she designed the United Nations Human Rights Convention in 1948, she followed in the footsteps of Jane Addams and Lillian Wald, who had traveled to Zurich after World War I to persuade the world's leaders to renounce war.

Finally, millions of women have organized anonymously in their communities to build social institutions. In every community, women from all walks of life built and staffed libraries, orphanages, day nurseries, medical clinics, schools and church programs. Sometimes in black communities, where political structures excluded men as well as women, women's church groups provided the bulwarks of racial self-reliance and developed the organizational skills that moved individuals to promote community change. These skills were used in the 1950s by women who had not yet achieved national prominence -- women like Ella Baker, Daisy Bates and Septima Clark, who joined hundreds of lesser known women in launching the massive protests of the civil rights movement.

Community efforts have also led women to recognize the limits of volunteer activity and to demand governmental improvements in sanitation, transportation, housing, safety and street lights. For example, Chicana in the Mexican American West forged local organizations around such women's issues as neighborhood safety, education and health care. Many of these have now become the province of governments. That's in large measure because women reached out from their communities to demand formal support for their volunteer efforts.

In the past generation, the legal status of American women has been transformed and their economic opportunities vastly expanded. Together, these changes have opened possibilities for increasing women's formal political influence. It's a welcome and an overdue step.

But women's history suggests that exclusion from formal citizenship encouraged women to extend citizenship rights and to broaden their meaning. We might then wonder how, now that women are moving towards full, formal inclusion, we will avoid the passivity among ordinary citizens that women have done so much to fend off. That makes this an important moment to reflect on some of the ways that women's history can motivate and inspire greater participation in the political process and thereby strengthen democracy in the United States and extend the

boundaries of social justice for all of us.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. LOVELL: Speaking of organizing, I see Evie Dubrow in the room, and she spent over 60 years in the labor movement, including over 40 years with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. And Evie, I know you have a question for Alice Kessler-Harris.

MS. DUBROW: I do, but before I start, may I just take a minute to say that my sister was one of the youngest suffragists in this country, and that she went to jail picketing the White House. (Laughter and applause.) Where she and a number of other suffragists went on a hunger strike. And when they came out, Alice Paul gave each of them a little prison door as a souvenir for their work on the right to vote. So I'm
delighted to be here tonight, and my question is an interesting one, I think. How do coalitions of women across race and class lines really work?

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: It's a difficult question. And as you know, most of us can think of more failures than we can successes when we try to think of the ways that women have worked across those lines. But just as gender -- well, just as ethnicity and race sometimes are called forward as elements of solidarity, when people try to face the important issues in their lives -- the moral issues, the economic issues that really matter to them -- so I think women, as well as men, sometimes call upon gender solidarity when they want to face those issues. For example, men who are told to go to war often call upon manliness and that kind of generosity to support their patriotic feelings.

Well, I think it's been that way with women around issues that they really cared about. For example, anti-lynching crusades, which are sparked and led by African American women, nevertheless led them to organize and call upon white women to join them as sisters in the campaigns against lynching that took place in the 1920s, and especially in the 1930s in the United States. The Women's Trade Union League, which you, I know, are familiar with, crosses class lines when middle-class women join with poorer and working women to organize for issues of social justice, around the conditions under which working women work.

And your own union, the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, which has now been amalgamated into UNITE, of course, was a pioneer in creating solidarity across racial and class lines -- sorry, across racial lines -- in the interests of organizing working people. In the 1930s, it pioneered strategies which involved social events and occasions where black and white men and women -- but mostly women -- could get together in music classes, on the dance floors of local ballrooms, at basketball games, and so on -- creating a kind of solidarity that then served them well when they were on the picket line later.

And now, what we're going to do is see images of women's fights for rights. And then Nancy Cott will speak to you. (Applause.)

(A video is shown.)

PROFESSOR COTT: President Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, my honored copanelists and esteemed guests, it's an honor and thrill to be here tonight to talk to you about women's political history and their struggle for rights.

Americans don't know a great deal about this history. If they know anything, they usually know that we didn't have the vote at first and then achieved it; and possibly they know that the first organized public demand for women to vote was a meeting at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 -- especially since the 150th anniversary of that was just celebrated. And I can hope that most people know that the amendment that did remove the sex disqualification from voting as the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, and that it was passed in this century, in 1920.

But we need to know more than these firsts in order to honor the past. We tend to make a big fuss about firsts, but in women's history as in many things, a first breakthrough does not mean smooth sailing and, in fact, in the campaign for the vote, successive generations had to continue to campaign, reinvent the struggle and face failure after failure before they succeeded. In fact, it was half the nation's history in 1920, half the nation's history since the Declaration of Independence, women had been trying to remove the sex disqualification from the ballot when they did succeed.

And the year 1920 is then rightly seen as the great divide between women's non-voting history and their voting history. But it is too simple to say that no women voted before that and all women voted after it. There were states that granted the women to vote, some quite early -- Colorado in 1893, for instance, California in 1911, New York in 1917 -- and it is too simple to say that all women voted after 1920 because women were prevented from exercising the right to vote by race, by poverty, by unstable residence.

The most dramatic example is African American women in the South, who, like the men of their race, were kept from exercising the ballot by state disqualifications such as poll taxes, literacy tests and other forms of voter qualification that were administered unequally to black and white.

Today we tend to assume that voting is a right, even an attribute, of citizenship. But this was not always so. This example makes a very important point, that the rights -- the content and qualities of citizenship in our rights is not a fixed quantity, is not a fixed content. New groups who come into the polity see rights and needs anew, and press for new definitions.

In this century, in the early part of this century, more women than ever before -- more kinds of women than ever before -- thought the ballot was a right that they needed to exercise. In the 19th century, in fact, the vast majority of women did not think they needed the ballot. But in the early 20th century, wage-earning women such as some of those who have been mentioned -- such as, for instance, the very feisty Leonora O'Reilly -- wanted labor legislation to be passed. They realized women wouldn't get this without the vote.

Black women leaders, such as Mary Church Tyrell or Hallie Brown, wanted to fight

against lynching, as Alice mentioned; wanted to fight against the disenfranchisement of their race. They needed the ballot to do so. There were middle-class women who were very concerned with the state of the cities and social reform. There were women who wanted to enter professions, like law or medicine, and found sex discrimination dogging their paths. And all these groups of women realized that they had no political clout without the ballot, so they joined the suffrage movement.

And at that time, hundreds of thousands of women devoted their lives to the campaign. Women like Ms. Dubrow's sister, used new flamboyant techniques to alert the public to this need. Some literally devoted their lives. A very beautiful, highly educated and accomplished Vassar graduate named Inez Mulholland, who was known for riding a white horse to lead a grand suffrage parade on the day of Woodrow Wilson's inaugural in this city, totally upstaging the inauguration -- (laughter) -- devoted herself so exhaustingly to her speaking tour that she died on the tour, because she totally neglected her health, and
at barely age 30 ended her life.

Now, once women were enfranchised the ballot certainly provided a gateway, but not all the rights that women wanted or needed. And, of course, it's not only the formal grant of rights that matters, it is the ability to exercise those rights as the prevention of black people in the South from voting showed. But another issue was women and holding political office. Women were not barred by sex from holding political office by this time, but could a political aspirant get a major party to nominate her -- that was the barrier.

Also, state laws at the time, in the time in the 1920s were strewn with discrimination. For instance, a waitress could not work at night in most states when the tips were largest. A married woman could not take out a loan in her own name. Only about half the states put women on juries, and the other half resisted, some for decades.

These many discriminations added up to a lesser legal status, really a lesser enactment of citizenship for women. And there was a small group of women who thought there was a way to address this. They wanted to add another amendment to the Constitution, and they called it the Equal Rights Amendment. If you think this was a feature only of the political landscape of the 1970s, you have to rethink that, because the Equal Rights Amendment was first introduced into Congress in 1923, and it was introduced every decade after that. It almost passed the Houses of Congress during World War II. It did pass, of course in 1972, never to be ratified.

Now, the reason that that amendment never has been ratified are complex. I think one could boil them down to the point that equal to many people means exactly the same, and they are wary about granting women exactly the same rights as men when they feel women are different from men.

This actually reminds me of the 1970s slogan, "Women who want to be equal to men lack imagination." (Laughter.) But the larger truth is that women are the same as men, and are different from men. And the question is, can something as abstract as rights encompass and address that paradox?

The women's movement more recently, in the '60s and '70s and '80s, leapt into that question be trying to re-envision rights, and catapulting many new concepts of rights onto the political stage -- reproductive rights; rights to the control of one's own body; equal pay for comparable worth; welfare rights; the right to be free of sexual harassment on the job; the right to maternity leave; the right to equal educational and athletic facilities. All of these new claims extended the horizon of rights and of imaginable rights, and women's invention of them changed the whole political landscape.

Continuing this redefinition, as we look forward to the next hundred years or the next millennium, let us try to think of more inclusive versions of rights that will be advantageous to all Americans. I think knowing more about the past of women as citizens can help us imagine this more generous future.

Women in this past century, the 20th century, have been struggling to define and to attain rights that will allow us to be equal and different, too. And groups not defined by gender often see that as their task as well. It's a task that is still ahead of us as a society. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. LOVELL: Thanks, Nancy. I'd like to call on a fighter for rights, Senator Birch Bayh, leader of the Title IX legislation giving young women equal access to physical education, and sponsor of the ERA amendment -- not in 1923, in 1973.

Senator Bayh. (Applause.)

SENATOR BAYH: It's always a privilege for me to be here with so many of you who -- we've worked together. And Evie, you started with a personal observation. Permit me to do the same. Some people may say, how does a fellow from the heartland, right off the farm in conservative Indiana, get involved in equal rights for women. Well, I was blessed by having two wonderful women in my life, one who is no longer with me and one who is still tolerating me -- (laughter) -- who gave me a magnificent Ph.D. in the importance of women's rights. (Laughter.) And I must say that is a continuing learning process.

We all know that women's inclusion as full citizens has had a profound impact on our country. Could you help us understand a little more specifically how women voters use their franchise as a class where there are different patterns that distinguished how women voted from how the majority of men voted that really led our society in a better direction, if you please.

PROFESSOR COTT: Thank you. I'll try to address that. Certainly, when women first got the vote, commentators were very interested in whether they would vote differently. One of the prime reasons it was claimed that women needed the vote was because they were an interest group who differed from men as a
group in their needs.

As a result, when women didn't vote entirely differently from men in the '20s -- which

would have, in fact, been very difficult, given that we had a two-party system at that time -- when women didn't vote dramatically differently from men, they were declared to vote exactly the same as men, i.e., exactly the same as their husbands. And very quickly after women were first enfranchised, the notion that there was what we today call a "gender gap" was quashed, and the notion that women would form a voting bloc more or less dissipated.

It was also true at that time that women's turnout was lower than men's, that this has happened with several groups of new voters, that it takes a while for a newly-enfranchised group to exercise the franchise, so that the turnout of women was lower than among men in the 1920s; then continued to grow until they were about at parity in the 1950s.

We're hampered as historians from knowing just how differently women might have voted from men in the past in that the polls were not kept by sex -- it was only in a very few places -- Illinois was interested in this -- before the era of exit polls. This information just isn't gatherable. And it's really a very recent phenomenon, that really since the 1980s that the concept of a gender gap has appeared.

It has been looked for since then and, therefore, it has been found. The percentage differences between women's votes and men's votes on parties, on candidates, rather than on issues, has been tracked very avidly since the mid-'80s. And percentage point differentials from three to eight percent that in the 1920s were absolutely dismissed as meaningless because they expected all women to vote differently from all men, have now become significant.

So I would suggest that patterns of actual voting, given that we don't have a multiparty system in our nation -- if we had seven or eight parties, one might see more difference. But in a two-party system the range is going to be small and it will mainly be trackable on issues. And since it's very rare for candidates to run on single issues, the differences between women and men as voters get spread out through the system and show up in very small percentage differences -- which may be as much attributable to women's or men's race or region or education or age as their gender, in fact.

Now, we're going to see more images, which will be about the practice of citizenship, and that will precede Dr. Ruth Simmons's comments on that topic. (Applause.)

(A video is shown.)

DR. SIMMONS: President Clinton; Mrs. Clinton; Nancy and Alice: It's so moving to be here tonight, honoring the extraordinary advances of women in this century.

You know, as a college president, I have the privilege each year of welcoming a large number of young women to my campus who, in the course of four years, must confront where they stand in relationship to history; what they will make of their world; and how they will maximize their own capabilities in the service of their families and their communities. And then, four years later, I'll have the joy of seeing them off, as they enter the work world,

hopefully, advance to higher learning or otherwise take on adult roles.

After studying what others have accomplished down through history, and after apprenticing for so many years, they finally get to choose their own path. And that one phrase, I think, captures the really dramatic change in women's lives in the United States over the course of this century. Today, thanks to Title IX, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, women are able to choose their path.

Young women understand that, they revel in it, and most often, they claim that privilege with considerable pride. This is a difference wrought by the courageous reformers who insisted on the right of women to be fully enfranchised as citizens, with the duty of choice and the right of happiness.

Women of the next century will be molders of their future and proprietors of their fate. Provided that society continues to protect that freedom, women will have that most extraordinary, precious thing -- ownership of themselves.

We know that history can record and interpret only a small portion of the many compelling stories that have influenced the phenomenal changes that we've seen. One of the most encouraging trends of recent times has been what seems to be a greater inclusion of unheralded lives and different voices, through oral histories, unconventional and ahistorical sources, and first-hand accounts, with all the problematical aspects of those accounts. Past struggles for justice are rich in these stories of lesser, lesser actors, who have helped to shape our civic culture and transform society, without themselves qualifying for history's hall of fame.

As one who is inspired by countless lesser heroes of the women's rights and civil rights movements, I rather like to remind people on such occasions as this, that it's also acceptable -- desirable even -- to be inspired by the common folk. It's important to acknowledge the often invisible efforts that are the backbone of all struggles for justice. For such small examples, too, can inspire in the young civic engagement at the highest and most socially transforming levels. Those who live the rather routine life of involved citizens are our quotidian heroes. They are our models for daily life.

My grandmother, Emma Campbell, grew up in the South during Reconstruction. Although she was a smart, enterprising woman, the legacy of slavery gave her no rights, essentially, few protections under the law. And, yet, when her husband died she had to farm and rear her children. Though poor, she engaged in community and church life in her small town.

Her daughter, my mom, Fannie, was born in 1906. She married a laborer and a sharecropper. And for much of her life as a domestic worker she was consigned to brutal, unprotected labor at meager wages. After a century -- almost a century after the birth of her mother, she remained in legal, social and economic servitude, bounded by the system that had denied her mother equal rights.

So enduring was the legacy of racial and gender discrimination in the country of her birth,

but emulating her courageous mother, she persevered. And finally, because of her efforts and the critical mass of reformers pushing for elimination of the laws that held her to limited education, low wages and an economically-deprived life, her children and Emma's grandchildren were finally able to see the light of freedom and experience greater life choices.

There is earnestness and valor to be found in the simplest acts of civic engagement, and especially, I think, the civic engagement of poor people. Like Emma and like Fannie, Oceola McCarty was unnoticed until she surprised the world with her bequest of scholarship funds to the University of Southern Mississippi. Well, the world now knows of her lifetime of saving and self-denial. But her entire life before this act of generosity could be examined for what it offers us about the spirit of concern and commitment that ought to underpin our social relations and civic attitude. Indeed, with women just beginning to come into their own as philanthropists, Oceola's gift is especially important in inspiring women of means to do better than the small gifts that have proved typical of women's philanthropy.

Imagine: If women could found and endow colleges like Spelman and Smith in the last century, an act that contributed greatly to the reforms of this century, just imagine what women's philanthropy will mean to the century ahead, with women controlling 60 percent of the country's wealth. Women's philanthropy, surely, will be one of the most decisive dimensions of women's activism in the new century.

Young people today -- they don't often know it or say it -- but they've really benefitted enormously from the endeavors of all those who worked so hard for women's rights, both on the front line and behind it; whether visible or not; whether recognized or not. Together, these reformers have prepared the leaders of today by inculcating a will to change the status quo, and they have prepared the leaders of tomorrow by proving that wrongs can be made right. They've given our young people the best gift they could have, and that is the ownership of their future.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. LOVELL: I'm going to call on another college president, Dr. Jeanetta Cole, anthropologist and former president of Spelman College.

DR. COLE: I do have a question for the sister president of one of our nation's women's colleges. Sister president, there have been many victories, but many challenges remain for all women. For women of color weneed to give particular focus on our inequalities. What do you think we can do to more effectively address the ongoing inequalities experienced by women of color?

DR. SIMMONS: Thank you, Jeanetta. It's wonderful to see you. Well, I've been quite moved -- and I know you have, too -- by the telling of these stories from the last century and this, when women, reformers, worked very hard to achieve rights for women of color. That's one of the most moving aspects of the women's movement, frankly. Spelman, itself, was founded of course by white women from Massachusetts who went down with a fervor of

freedom to Atlanta to work with Reverend Quarles to found a college for black women.

I think more than anything it's to continue to say to would be reformers that it's not enough for women to achieve equal rights. It's not enough for women to achieve equal rights for women who are white. We must not leave anybody behind. And with the pay differential today, with the differential in access to many different aspects of society, I think we have to continue to press for equality for women of color.

I'm especially concerned that we emphasize education. I don't like to raise an unpleasant topic, but I must say I'm very concerned about the attack on affirmative action, because -- (applause) -- let me say that I don't think for a moment that affirmative action is a panacea or that it's perfect, but I do think that it provided opportunities for women to come into their own. And I just don't want people of color and women of color to be left out of that.

So now that we see women achieving so much, white women particularly, I want to see them reach back and embrace women of color, and say, come on and go with us. That's the most important thing we can do to carry that message home. Thank you. (Applause.)

DR. SIMMONS: Mr. President, you've listened to us patiently and I know that you have some remarks to make and that you might even have some questions to ask. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. First of all, let me welcome all of you here tonight and thank our participants. I will be very brief, because the only thing that frustrates me about these Millennial Evenings is that you will be amazed -- we will get literally thousands of questions that will start coming in on the Internet and lots of frustrated people out there. So I don't want to take a lot of time.

I would like to say again -- I think I speak for all of us -- when Hillary had the idea to do these evenings, I thought they sounded interesting -- or at least maybe most of them would be interesting. (Laughter.) They have all turned out to be fascinating and, each in their own way, better than the ones before. And I think this is a great gift she has given our country for the millennium and I thank her for it. (Applause.)

The remarks generated scores of questions in my mind and one fact I want to say. If you ever want an example of whether or not the gender gap exists, you are looking at it. (Laughter.) Because I would not be here if it did not exist. (Applause.) Or if it did not exist in the right way I would have had bigger margins, depending on how you look at it. (Laughter.)

One of the things I wish that somebody would comment on before we get through -- although, it's not my question -- is, if women learn different ways of doing things through the century of struggle, how would this Congress be different if the party divisions were exactly the same, but 55 percent of the members were women? That would be interesting. I don't know the answer to that, but feel free to comment if anyone wants to. (Laughter.)

I want to ask Professor Kessler-Harris to answer a question that has concerned me quite a

great deal, just from remembering the patterns of life with my working grandmother and my working mother. Now that we have opened more opportunities for women in the workplace, but they still are spending, I think, even in two-parent households, more than half of the time spent raising children, and we've even opened more opportunities for women in the political workplace, and more are being opened all the time, I would like to have you comment on what you think the potential is for voluntary citizens' groups of women to still produce both social movements and specific legislative changes. That is, will voluntary groups still have the same impact? And if so, how are we going to continue to encourage that?

Because I think that that's really the unique story of the whole 20th century, all those parades and everything we saw in the films. Will more women in the workplace, still having to raise the kids -- and in the political workplace, which may make women think they're represented in more ordinary ways -- lead to a reduction or an increase in these voluntary associations? And what are some specific examples where we might see voluntary movements produce social movements and legislative change?

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: Well, that's another lecture I could give you all -- (laughter) -- but thanks for the question. I think there are two ways of answering that question, and the first is to say that the entry of women into the workplace, entry which, of course, I, like most of this room welcome, nevertheless poses enormous challenges, not only to what women can continue to do at home, but to what women can continue to do in their communities. And I think that those challenges have to be met on a series of levels that are not individually based.

I think we have to meet those challenges by providing opportunities for men as well as for women, but for people totake care of both their homes and their workplaces. And I would suggest that some ways of doing that are to think about issues, for example, of working time -- you know, perhaps it's time to start thinking about reducing the working week from 40 hours to 35 hours a week. Perhaps it's time to take seriously flex-time for many different kinds of workers so that people can both work and take care of their homes and their communities.

It may be time to think about a broader concept, like thinking about Social Security as not only a benefit that we get at the end of our lives, but a benefit that we can get during our lives, drawing rights on Social Security -- so that we can take a year or two off here or there to take care of our families and our children. Those are some of the ways I think that we could think about the legislation that would provide opportunities.

And just to segue from that into your first question, I think it would not be unusual to imagine that such legislation could be pushed for and pioneered by the kinds of women who pushed for and pioneered early labor standards legislation.

My favorite example, for example, of the kinds of legislative consequences that happen when groups of volunteers committed to producing social change get together probably rotates around the state-based branches of the national consumers league, which for decades -- two, three decades -- organized to try to get minimum wage legislation for women, maximum hour legislation for women because they thought they couldn't get it for all workers, tried to get child

labor legislation. And of course, we know that in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, their efforts came to fruition.

So there are examples. In other words, the kinds of examples that I suggest might actually answer your question. Let's think as a community about the kinds of opportunities we can develop, actually do a precedence in the past with groups of women who could imagine legislation to create broader social justice, and then actually discover that it was implemented first on state levels and then on the broader national levels.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you. We are going to take our first question from the Internet. And, Mrs. Clinton, it's for you. MRS. CLINTON: This is from Brock Hopein Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and the question is: We all know that sports competition among children provides friendship and team skills for the future. As the First Lady, what have you done to further this for women?

This must be a question for me because of my well-known sports abilities. (Laughter.) You know, I one time was being interviewed on a radio show back in 1992, and this young interviewer was looking at his notes that he had gotten from somewhere, and he said, well, we see here that you were a diving champion in your young years. And I said, no I wasn't. And he said, well, yes, it says right here you were a diving champion. (Laughter.) And I had long since given up arguing. Anyone who knows so much more about my life than I do -- (laughter) -- so this must be from the same crib sheet.

You know, I think, though, that it's a serious question because we've learned a lot in the last several years about some of the socializing that goes on among young children and what creates opportunities for both young men and women to see themselves as competitive and to understand what they might do physically and what kind of mental challenges they can confront, and sports certainly does that.

Just last week, here at the White House, in this room, we screened an HBO special about women in sports, called "Dare to Compete." And I really recommend that to anyone, because it's a wonderful story about how women gradually have broken down the barriers that stood in the way for those who did have athletic abilities to pursue those abilities.

And thanks to things like Title IX, which transformed the world of women's sports, so many more young girls in high school and college are now able to enjoy sports and enjoy the benefits that come from being part of a team, and pushing oneself. And we, of course, now have even professional athleteswho earn their living in the world of sports.

And so I've tried to promote that through the President's Council on Physical Fitness, through events that we've held here at the White House. But I think it's something all of us should do more to encourage, so that any young girl who's interested and has abilities can take advantage of the opportunities that are now available that really weren't when many of us in this room were young women in school growing up, and didn't have that chance. (Applause.)

Q Thank you, Mrs. Clinton.

MS. LOVELL: I'm going to recognize Deborah Tannen, a linguist and Georgetown University professor.

THE PRESIDENT: She's coming.

PROFESSOR TANNEN: Thank you. I guess for either of you, I'm interested in the evolution of language and how that reflects our times, and the evolution of the times. It seems that there has been a gradual change in the language that women reformers have used to describe their struggles. So whereas at one time we heard about the fight for women's rights that was going to focus on women's liberation. I wonder if you observe any current trends here in the '90s, what is the language that you're hearing that women are using to describe their struggles today?

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: I think I'd probably describe it as the language of human rights; that is, I think we've now -- which is not a new language for women, women have used that language at least since World War I, but it's become increasingly the language of the women's movement, I think. And it reflects not nearly the sense that the liberation of women or the achievement of women's rights will advance women to a better place in society, but the sense that in so advancing women all of society will benefit.

And I think it also reflects the fact that we are increasingly conscious of a kind of global dimension to both our own experiences and how those experiences are affected by an in-turn effect -- those of women as well as men in the rest of the world.

So I'd say that human rights is probably the new way in which advocates for women's rights are now imagining that they can influence the world around them. That's really, I think, what we all imagine we're fighting for.

PROFESSOR COTT: I would just add something. It seems to me in terms of parlance, that often the term "women's issues" is used when people want to talk about things like this, and there's a certain vagueness to that terminology. and I think there is reason for that, that many people feel women's rights, formal rights, have been achieved, or even that women's freedoms, liberation have been achieved. Yet, there's still something out there.

There still are all the questions of masculinity and femininity, of what the relations between the sexes really are in public, in private, why there are differences, some of which seem unwanted. And I think women's issues expresses that the same way that in the last century the general term "the woman question" similarly gestured that a whole realm of unresolved and clearly not easy questions that remain there. and while I agree with Alice that international human rights is a context in which formal searches for rights are more likely to be conducted, that there's a whole other realm of questions that require a more vague sort of rubric.

DR. SIMMONS: I would definitely say that among the young students that I see, that there is almost an evasion of language, in a sense, a shying away from using those conventional terms to express what they are doing, what they are all about. It's intriguing, actually, to see where they're going to come down in the end, because they're going to have to call it something -- (laughter) -- and I don't know what that will be. But a kind of antipathy for labels of any kind, really.

MRS. CLINTON: But I think there's something else at work here that you probably could explain, as a linguist. Partof the reason that women shy away from any labels is because the labels have been attacked and devalued. It is rare to find a woman who will admit that she's a feminist. And there's nothing wrong with that. If you look at it in the dictionary, you know, feminist is someone who believes in the equality of legal economic and social rights between men and women -- and not that women are the same as or better than, but that under legal and economic systems they deserve to have the same rights as men. But that word has taken such a beating from those who have different conceptions or agendas that there is a backing off.

And I was interested in seeing a recent article in a newspaper talking about the feminization of politics. And that began to creep into the political parlance back in the '96 election, when many of the initiatives that the President and the administration took -- whether it was on child care or talking about issues that are kitchen-table kinds of issues, were all of a sudden derided as being insignificant and leading, therefore, to the feminization of politics.

And I'm not sure that that was intended as a compliment by the people who were using it, but I think it was really missing the point, because part of what the women's-rights-as-human-rights agenda is meaning to do is to lead to the humanization of politics, to take the legitimate interests of women and men as they attempt to shape their own lives, and give it some life in the political process.

You know, shortly after I said that phrase at the speech in Beijing, I was on a Voice of America show where a man called in from Iran. And he said to me, just what did you mean saying that women's rights are human rights? And I said, well, shut your eyes and think of your rights under any legal system that you function in, and those should be the same rights that women have.

But it seemed like such a shocking concept that the language is attacked -- not the underlying concept so much as the language -- as a first effort to try to diminish or marginalize these remaining issues that are difficult to talk about, to put into language that people can agree upon. And that's part of the great effort, it seems to me, that we're going to face in the next years, is to give voice to this human rights agenda in ways that really do resonate in average people's lives, and withstand political opposition, which will surely come. (Applause.)

MS. LOVELL: And since Professor Tannen is an expert about language, I should say that she may be a linguist, but she's also an expert in linguistics. And we have another question from the Internet.

MRS. CLINTON: This is a question from Laura Montaith (phonetic) of St. Martin in Canada, and it's for Professor Simmons: What would you suggest as a means for involving men in the education of boys about the importance of women in our society? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Good question.

DR. SIMMONS: Well, I love that question and I'm very happy to have it. Because I think that it's a very important issue for us. As the mother of a son, who has come along with his peers and who -- I can't believe it -- as strongly as I feel about these issues, somehow I missed the boat with him because he didn't quite get it. (Laughter.)

So I think it's very important in the home for fathers to take their sons by the hand and to lead them into this wonderful light where people are equal and there doesn't have to be supremacy of one gender over another or one race or ethnic group over another. And it can be lovingly taught from the time a child is very young in the home. That's one of the best ways to do it.

For those men who are taking the time to mentor young boys who don't have fathers in the home, one of the things that they can do, in addition to taking them to athletic events and showing them how boys can be boys, they can also talk to them about women's rights and girls and how smart girls can be and how girls aspire to do the same kinds of things as boys.

So I think it's in the home, I think it's in the schools, obviously, I think it's by mentors who are involved in young boys' lives.

THE PRESIDENT: I just wanted to say one thing that I have learned from a lifetime of sort of listening to the way people talk and relate. And this goes to Deborah's, the previous question, too -- I think if you will really study the Americans and how they vote, you will see that sometimes they vote based on income, sometimes they vote based on racial experience, sometimes they vote on philosophy. But a lot of the gender gap is a cultural gap, it's almost about the way we relate to one another and define winning and losing in our own lives.

And I think in order for men to ever get through this, one of the things that men are raised to believe is that fulfillment and success is defined in terms of winning and control, whereas people who -- women, historically, have had more nurturing roles. They have to raise their children. So you don't think -- maybe you have to control your child for a while, but sooner or later you -- but winning is defined not just as winning against someone else, but it's doing something in the context of your family, in the context of your child-rearing.

And I think a lot of subconscious patterns that men are raised with make it almost impossible for them to really get there on this issue. And I think that for a father to raise a son to believe that there is a way to win in life and find fulfillment in a shared victory and shared decision-making and not always victory over someone else and continued control over someone else, I think it's something that takes some doing.

But it's something that doesn't come naturally to men once we've been socialized. And I think that's an important part of this -- that until we can change it, it will never be just like it should be.

MS. LOVELL: I want to go to one of the students in our audience, Kristin Gayman (phonetic), who is here with her teacher, Gloria Cobbs (phonetic) from the School Without Walls.

Q My question is addressed to Dr. Simmons. It is evident that women have overcome many obstacles throughout the 19th and 20th century -- obstacles faced women of today's society and how can women prepare for this struggle for equal rights?

DR. SIMMONS: So many of the obstacles that young women face today are both similar and quite dissimilar to what we actually experience. I think one of the things that young women your age, and a little bit older, want to do is to move into those areas that are still frontiers for us.

And we have, for example, at my college, been thinking about women in careers that have not particularly been hospitable to women -- science and engineering, for example. Women are still trying to get their foot in the door in so many areas, and
I think that's one of the things to think about. Being educated at the high school level in all dimensions. Stay in your math courses; stay in your science courses -- all the way through high school. Because if you do that, you'll have the opportunity to choose, at the college level, to do anything that you want. Poetry is wonderful. Literature is wonderful. Social sciences are very strong. Environmental science is wonderful. But you also want to be able to choose other careers as well. We're surrounded by technology this evening, and it's wonderful. But so many young women are not learning technology in the way that boys are, or young men are. So it's important,
especially, not to be shut out of that dimension. Those are just a few things that I would suggest.

MS. LOVELL: This question is from Gary Daley (phonetic) -- also in Terre Haute. There must be a group or people in Terre Haute watching this. And this is for Professor Cott: How has the term "feminism" been defined in this century, and is it a term, in your view, which has value politically, inspirationally, and philosophically, for the next century?

PROFESSOR COTT: Well, this fellow's right on your very eloquent remarks, which I second very heartily.

life, they tend to want to forget the past rather than remember the past, which may have been a painful past. So it isn't unique, I think, to young women to feel that way about this.

MS. LOVELL: We can -- Marsha Semmel, I found you. The Director of the Museum of the West and, I think, women in your state could vote 23 years before the 19th Amendment?

Q Yes, and actually that's my question, is about remembering the past, as we move into the future. And I also wanted to say that we're privileged to be one of the satellite downlink sites, so we have a whole group on the front range of the Rocky Mountains who are able to share this, and thank you for allowing us to share this.

My question is for Nancy Cott, and it's: why did it take so long for women to get the national ballot after states like Colorado granted women the right to vote in the 19th century?

PROFESSOR COTT: Yes. And I should mention Wyoming, which granted women the right to vote in 1869. So that really deserves the first credit.

Well, there are several levels of reasons, and I'll try to be brief. And I think the reasons were somewhat different in the 19th century than they were in the early 20th. But the very deepest-based, in terms of political understanding of citizenship in this country, and in the whole western political tradition, the fully active citizen was not only conceptualized as a male person, but as a man who was head of a household, and whose vote represented not only himself but his dependents, his wife and his minor children. But it was his household that deserved representation through his vote, so that, at the deep structure level of political understanding, for women to vote would have meant removing a man's reason for voting, would have removed the important part of his dependents, whom he was representing.

And this had a more social representation in the strong feeling through the 1800s and much of the early 1900s that it just wasn't suitable for women to vote, that women had different concerns. The way they expressed their political influence was to be different, through the household.

And there were many, many women who were not in favor of the ballot, on the basis of thinking that women exercised their civic responsibilities better without the ballot by influencing their husbands, sons, brothers, nephews and by acting as volunteers along some of the lines that Alice was describing.

By the early 20th century the concept of the vote itself changed, becoming both more of an individualized exercise and more of a way that groups in the polity could express their group interest -- groups like working class industrial laborers, or groups such as people who wanted to expand land rights in the west or certain new immigrant groups. The whole scene of voting was different in the early 20th century. And women suffragettes made a strong plea for their interests as women needing to be represented and that was what began to carry them into success

The term "feminism" in fact, is a word of this century. It was not used by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. It was first used in about the 19-teens by young women who wanted to grasp rights beyond the formal political rights. They wanted the rights to be as free as men in the economic arena and the arena of personal life, as well as in political life.

And it was also a term adopted by the pioneers of the ERA in the 1920s. So that this is not the first time thatfeminism has, as a term, has been battered. Because when it stood for equal rights at a time when equal rights was seen as posed against certain special privileges or certain special protections that women had in the law earlier in this century, it was also a term that was demeaned as narrow or just undesirable.

And I think it really was not until the 1970s and in the height of the public movement of women of various sorts -- in the '70s the term was embraced again, and since then there has been, as you were suggesting, Mrs. Clinton, a real devolution. I sometimes worry that my students today think feminism means either hating men or not shaving your legs, or both. (Laughter.)

And I try to tell them that it means -- roughly, the dictionary definition -- that women ought to have the same rights or have the same opportunities as men, and however, I think that the terminology, as much as I, myself, am in favor of the term feminism, I actually think that it can have inspirational characteristics, but that what we ought to work toward is a proliferation of more words that will express women's political, social, economic struggle, the ways in which they share needs and wants for justice with men; and that the words for women's political actions and civic action have been very limited, even in our century, and we need to discover and discuss other terms and put them into use to express really the great variety of activities that women have undertaken.

MRS. CLINTON: Still, I hope we don't run from feminism --

PROFESSOR COTT: No, I don't want to abandon it, I think we ought to supplement it.

DR. SIMMONS: One thing that strikes me, though, Nancy, is that the further we get towards achieving some of the content of what we normally include under feminism, the more young people seem to back away from using the word itself. So the more opportunities they actually have in the work force, the more possibilities they have for political engagement and so on, the more they're willing to say, no, no, I'm not a feminist. And it's an odd sort of juxtaposition that the more young women get, the less they understand either the history of feminism and its achievements or what the term can mean for them.

PROFESSOR COTT: Although, I think this is not unique to feminism, it's part of the promise of America, in fact, that so many groups who have been historically subordinated or repressed in one way or another, when they come into a fuller

in various states.

They were then opposed by specific interest groups like liquor interests, who thought that women were all enfranchised; certainly, prohibition would be national. And both of those things did happen, although in a different sequence. So I'm not sure their analysis was entirely right. And then there were certain industrialists -- a lot of the Southern states were rock-ribbed against women's suffrage, not so much on issues of race -- although, that was certainly very important -- but because there was a huge, burgeoning textile industry in the South and Southern -- influential Southerners -- many of them thought that if women were enfranchised the kinds of conditions in Southern industries would be changed by women reformers and they didn't want those women reformers to have the power of the vote.

So the constitutional amendment went through without any of the southern states voting for it, ratifying it.

MRS. CLINTON: This is from Lela Turner from Lineham, Delaware. Professor Kessler-Harris, what are the vital voices you hear when listening to the sound of the new women's movement? Who are today's leaders?

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: Well, present company excepted, of course, (laughter) -- I think probably today's leaders are some of those anonymous voices that we have not yet heard from. My guess would be that some of today's leaders are still young people, grappling with the problems that still remain from an incomplete women's movement and from some of the tremendous tensions that have resulted from the transformation of households and work in the past decade or so.

I think some of today's leaders are women who are just now entering the grass-roots of political organization, political strategies. That is, women who have been inspired, perhaps, by people like Mrs. Clinton, and by other political leaders as well to think about how they, too, can contribute along formal, as well as informal lines.

My guess is we don't know who the next generation of leaders are. And we know who some of the people who have led us this far are, but we've yet to discover the people who are already moving us forward into the future.

MS. LOVELL: Well, I'd like to recognize one of our Vital Voices, Judith Lichtman, President of the National Partnership for Women and Families. And you have a question, I know.

Q I was once again thrilled to hear the President's question involved the real struggle for balancing work and family responsibilities, because as the authors of the Family and Medical Leave and as the first law that President Clinton signed, enacted into law, we have a special bond and great respect for his commitment.

It was Mrs. Clinton who chided me ever so gently a couple of years ago not to think anymore or speak anymore with respect to language of juggling family and work responsibilities, because she reminded me that for many women it's a struggle. Women are struggling to balance work and family responsibilities.

And so I thought both about the question of how do we raise boys and men to be involved in family responsibilities and then Professor Cott's quick comment about juries and women being excluded from juries really, I know, until quite the mid-'70s, and wondered if that's the reason? Was it stereotypic notions about women's work, responsibilities within the family and the home that kept us from participating in public life, i.e, juries, until the '70s, in many states?

PROFESSOR COTT: Well, yes, to put it most simply. There were many, many arguments brought against women as jurist, some of which were about feminine characterizations that women were irrational -- simple things of this sort. (Laughter.) But in fact where the fight lasted the longest was on differential jury requirements -- that is, that all men would be required to serve, but women only when they chose to. And that, of course, meant that women exempted themselves from juries, as most people, being lazy by nature, would.

However, the question was why was this so, why could a woman, say, just by being female she could choose to exempt herself. And the argument was, well, women are needed at home to cook the dinners, to take care of the children. In fact, I mean, we've dealt with this for decades now. But many things, differences in the law, particularly, that appear as privileges to women can also be seen as lesser obligations which, therefore, mean a kind of lesser capacity as citizens.

And there is language even in a Supreme Court decision of 1961 which allowed a state statute of that sort to stand, which basic language in the discussion at the Supreme Court in which said, well, who will cook the dinners if women are off at jury service?

This is in a period when a very high proportion of women were already in the labor force. But it was really due to the transformative work of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and women in the 1970s who worked so hard on so many transformative sex discrimination cases that the jury difference statutes were overruled by the Supreme Court, which said in '75 that men and women had to serve on the same terms.

As much as we can differ honestly as reasonable people on the question of whether equal rights mean the same rights, I think that we do want to say that women and men have the same obligations as citizens, and one of those very basic obligations and basic to our system of democracy is jury service.

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: Could I come in on that, just for a second, to say that -- of course, one of the things that prevented women from participating in public life, or prevented them until the 70s, was that notion of discrimination, and what it was -- it used to be said that discrimination against women was benign discrimination.

And under the guise of protecting women against all kinds of things -- against working, as Nancy mentioned, as waitresses at night; under the guise of protecting them in their future motherhood; under the guise of protecting their families and households -- it was said that this kind of legislation that prevented women from doing certain things -- serving on juries, working at certain jobs, and so on -- was good discrimination, not bad discrimination.

And that argument was made by both men and women through the 1960s, until finally, in the early 1970s, it was sort of confronted plainly, and we began to see -- it was a matter, sort of the perception of men and women, as well as changes in the law, that we began to understand that such discrimination could not be seen as benign, and that it was as destructive as any other form of discrimination.

MRS. CLINTON: Of course, many of those arguments were raised again to defeat the ERA, and that is a very recent history. You know the debates that were held in the 1970s over that.

This next question is from Marie Theresa Penwillio (phonetic) from Cambridge, Massachusetts, and it's for me, but it really is for everybody: As a first-year student at Harvard University, it's often somewhat difficult for me to understand the struggle which so many women went through to give me the opportunities that I oftentimes take for granted. Yet, it seems to my generation as if the struggle is over. Yet, we know that there is still a heavily unbalanced power distribution in government and top executive positions. Do you foresee an end to this inequity?

MRS. CLINTON: I will just start, and I hope everyone will contribute. You know, the very fact that this question could come from a young woman who says that she's a student at Harvard as opposed to a student at Radcliffe makes a very telling statement, because certainly when I was her age, Harvard was not open to young women.

So within her lifetime, or my lifetime, anyway, there have been a lot of changes, and I do hope that young women are least aware of the history. I mean, it's very important for them to be looking forward, but I think they do so at their peril if they don't have some understanding of the past and the struggles of their own mothers, as well as people whose lives they might read about in history books.

Clearly, the unbalanced power distribution is a worldwide phenomenon. This is not an American phenomenon. And one of the interesting issues that I've looked at as I've traveled in other countries and spoken with many, many women in various positions of leadership and advocacy roles, is how even in societies that have given much greater lip service to women's equality, it often falls far short of the aspiration that is set as an ideal.

And I think that has to do with many of the questions we were just beginning to discuss. And those are the very difficult and personal matters of this balance or this struggle, as Judith said, about the choices in women's lives.

And, you know, it's wonderful to have the choices that we now have to chart our own futures. But the result is that there are still many more complexities involved in women's choices, in general, being very stereotypical, than there are in men's choices, And that for women it's a constant stream of choices that have to be met. Does one take the promotion that is offered when one has a young child, knowing that that means you won't have the time to really invest in your child the way you want to. And, if so, does that mean you're forever off the track in government or business.

If you are an older woman, after you've raised your children, you've done what you thought you needed to do -- not what someone else expected of you -- will you be judged fairly if you attempt to re-enter the work force, even though you have an enormous amount to give to any organization that would be willing to employ you.

These are very difficult, personal decisions. And, of course, the lesson that young women often receive is that they can't "have it all." Which means that they cannot have the kind of family life they think they would like, plus the kind of professional life they would like to pursue. And until we get to a point where that is either a question that young men pose themselves, or neither young men or women have to pose, then there will continue to be an imbalance. And the imbalance will reflect the different life choices that are now open to women, but which exact consequences down the road as women attempt to try to have a fulfilling personal and professional life, as well as to make public contributions.

And I think it's important we keep all three of those aspects in mind, which is part of the reason why the speakers addressed different characteristics, because there are public roles that are not paid for, that are outside the home, that are critical to the functioning of any community, which women have traditionally carried out, but which more and more women feel, under the pressure of work, and paid work, and work in the home, they can no longer fulfill. And so we're losing a lot because of the absence of that volunteerism that was always a hallmark of women's contributions.

So I think that the question that Marie Theresa poses goes to the heart of the most difficult area, and perhaps the one that we're now ready to address as a society, and that is this intensely personal area of how one democratizes relationships. And that is a very difficult challenge. And so for the issues that young women will particularly confront, that will remain at the forefront of how they define their own lives, and how we as society define the conflicting roles that women take on, and between men and women.

Perhaps -- Alice, or Nancy, or Ruth?

PROFESSOR KESSLER-HARRIS: I mean, I completely agree with everything you've said, and think that perhaps we could even push it one step further. And that is to say that, in order to do that, I think we have to begin to think about the issue that was raised by one of the earlier questions, which is how men are socialized and whether we can't begin to imagine households in which men and women take equal responsibilities, or divide the responsibilities in some kind of more equitable way than is now the case.

But then I think we have to go yet one step further to say that I don't actually think we'll be able to do that until we begin to reduce some of our emphasis as families and as a society on the kinds of materialist values that we now possess. But I think in order to do that, we're going to have to think a little less as individuals, as families and as a society about what we possess and how we use it than -- and a little more about the sort of sharing of some of the social goods and social well-being of our society -- that until we can drop some of those materialist values or push them back a little bit and do a little more sharing, it will be very difficult to start reevaluating relationships in any one family until we think about how we're relating in the world as a whole.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, I was recently in California with Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher and I was in her district, and we're told by many of the people there that they commute two and a half hours to jobs at places like Sun Microsystems and others, and that they spend three to five hours on the road in their cars, away from their children and away from their spouses.

It makes it nearly impossible for them to think about how to balance family and work, let alone participate in the PTA, be a coach of a Little League team or whatever. And that's just one example, and it's certainly not confined to California or to the high-tech industry; you can find it throughout our country. And so there are social aspects of how individuals make these decisions, and I think that's an important lesson to be reminded of as we end this century.

You know, there were certainly social aspects as to how people lived their lives at the beginning of the last century that influenced how many hours they had to work. And there are stories of Jane Adams going through the neighborhood around Hull House and finding children tied to chairs because both parents had to be in the factories for 12 hours a day and there was no child care. So that sparked a movement that led to a lot of the changes that increased the quality of life for people in our country.

Well, today we may have to rethink how do we do this. And technology may be a friend in this because if there can be more opportunities to work at home or more decentralized work places, ways that both women and men can feel that they're more connected both to their home and to their community, that might create the kind of environment for some of these changes.

MS. LOVELL: And that's a perfect introduction to Ron Menson's* question to Dr. Simmons, isn't it? And Ron Menson is a senior project officer of the Ford Foundation.

If you notice I'm speaking faster it's because our time is fleeing so fast, so I'm going to encourage you to keep your answers short so we can get to the rest of the questions.

Q Well, thank you. I'd just like to say, though, prior to my question, that I think in the personal choices that you've spoken of, Mrs. Clinton, the whole question of how couples manage a dual career is part of it. And I think, just personally, I'd like to commend you and the President for that modeling, that helps a lot of people figure out what the possibilities are. (Applause.)

You've talked a great deal about the work of women as volunteers. In my own work at the Foundation, I see the need for men to become more involved in family and in community. Dr. Simmons, does having more women in public life mean that fewer volunteers will be available to conduct or direct activities that were specialized by women? And how can more Americans be encouraged to play this wider role?

DR. SIMMONS: I actually don't think so. And my reason for saying that is just my own experience in, for example, the communities of which I'm a part, and particularly African-American communities. I think that, if anything, people are committing themselves more to civic engagement. Older Americans who have retired -- some of them retiring older, some of them retiring quite young. I have a niece, who's only 50 years old, who's retired from corporate life. And what's she doing? She's volunteering in a local school, and also for the Diabetes Association.

So I think there is something -- I see also on the other end of the age continuum, young people who are engaging in these kinds of activities to an incredible extent. All of our students do this kind of service, more or less, today. It's a dramatic change. These are not individuals who will let go of that feeling of being involved in those communities.. So they will mature as adults, and retire, and put even more time into community endeavors.

So I think not. I think that also those people who are in public life are also finding ways to volunteer, to be involved in various dimensions. So I think, personally, it's a very rich environment for volunteer efforts. And so it's wonderful on this day to be thinking back about the ways in which this started for women and to see that today, women still have that fire in them to get things done in this country.

There's a whole world out there where women are still suffering bondage, and where children are in incredible circumstances. And women care about that, as men do as well, and want to help. So I just see many opportunities for more involvement.

MRS. CLINTON: Dr. Simmons's last comment leads, amazingly, and totally unplanned, to this e-mail question from attorney Vicky LeBlanc of Delafield, Wisconsin, and this is for the President: What can we as ordinary Americans do to help the women of Afghanistan? (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you, Vicky. First of all, I'm sure all of you here know how horrible the conditions are for women in Afghanistan. Hillary and I had an event here at the White House not very long ago, we had two Afghan women here, among others, to sort of stand for what women in their country are going through.

I want someone in the audience to help me. There is a national organization of women, a group now focused on this, and mostly the leaders are in California, although some in the East Coast -- Ann, what's the name of it?

MS. LEWIS: The Feminist Majority. And Ellie Smeal is here --

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, Ellie is here working -- Feminist Majority is working on it. And I'm going to have a meeting with some of their leaders very soon to talk about what more I can do, aside from not recognizing the Taliban and speaking against it.

I think the important thing is that we need people to support this organization. We need women and men around the country to engage in contributing to a common effort to highlight what is going on, who is being hurt, what the consequences are to the society as a whole and what we can do to help the people that are being hurt.

This is the 50th anniversary of the International Declaration of Human Rights. It is simply not acceptable to say that this is nothing more than an expression of religious convictions. We just had an election in Iran, local elections. There were hundreds of women candidates. We see, even in Iraq, a country we have serious differences with, their women are not subject to these sorts of constraints because they are women.

And I think the most important thing I could say to an ordinary citizen is, write your member of Congress and tell them not to acknowledge or recognize the government under any circumstances until there are changes, and -- (applause) -- get in touch with the Feminist Majority and get all the material, and make sure that you are doing whatever you can do to help those women over there and to give support for the ones that are sticking their necks out to try to change things.

MS. LOVELL: Thank you. A last quick question from Carol Gilligan, the founder of the Harvard Project on Psychology, and a quick answer.

Q This is for Professor Cott. Nancy, we've heard a lot about women's reformers and the fight for rights. But I wonder if you could say more about what you see as women's responsibilities as citizens.

PROFESSOR COTT: Well, briefly, I think we all share responsibilities as citizens that women and men are similarly indebted to the public and have a respect for the public interest and participate in it. I do think that as the President was referring to before, if women's historical and social situation has lend them some special qualities or lent many of them special qualities, then perhaps those can be especially valuable.

I mean, two areas that I think they might be are, one, in the area of finding ways to end war-making, not because I think women are intrinsically peaceful -- I don't -- but because in fact, historically, they have been much less involved in war-making as a gender group, and so -- this is certainly what women pacifists of the '20s, '30s, '40s thought and hoped, and I think there is potential for that for finding different means of reconciliation of differences.

And secondly, I mean, a very big problem of the world in general, not so much of our country, that I think women have a special interest in is the question of world over-population. I mean, it's clear around the world that where women are more educated birth rates drop.

So I do think that there are -- those are two very major areas. The 20th century has been the most destructive century in human history in terms of states' destruction of human lives. And let's hope the 21st reverses that pattern and maybe women citizens have something special to contribute to that.

MRS. CLINTON: And, Carol, I would just add that one of the ways we can honor the past is by voting. And there are still too many women who, for whatever reason, do not choose to exercise their right to vote -- which Evie's sisters and others fought for, for so many years. And it doesn't have to be different from men's voting, it just has to be an expression of one's own beliefs and a way of demonstrating one's responsibility as a citizen, the most fundamental obligation, it seems to me, in a democracy.

So anything we can do informally and formally to encourage women to feel empowered at least to vote is a step in the direction of making them feel that they have responsibilities which they will fulfill in this democracy.

MS. LOVELL: I'm sorry, didn't get to all your great questions. Mr. President, your final thoughts?

THE PRESIDENT: When the Founders wrote the documents that got us all started, they said they were doing all this so that we could better protect life and liberty, and pursue happiness. And even they were smart enough to know that they weren't really writing that for white male propertyholders only, even though those were the only folks that could vote then.

So a great deal of the history of this country is about the expansion of the notion of liberty, with notions of equality and justice. And we hardly ever think about what they meant by the pursuit of happiness. They didn't mean riding the rides at the county fair. They really meant the pursuit of a good life, dreaming dreams and trying to live them.

When I think about what the women's issues of the 21st century will be, I do think there will still be some significant liberty, equality issues related to wealth and power -- closing the wage gap, the earnings gap, dealing with the enormously complicated problem of the fact that

there are more elderly women than men -- because you may be genetically superior to us after all -- (laughter) -- and that, as a consequence, their poverty rate is twice the rate of elderly men. Breaking all the glass ceilings that have been alluded to.

But I predict to you that there will be increasing focus, more than at any time in our history, on the latter purpose of our getting together as a nation -- and that is the pursuit of happiness. And I believe that will require us to deal with questions of balance and interdependence, more than ever before. The one we talked about a little tonight is a balance between work and family. There is no more important job for any society than raising children. And men have to recognize that, too. But I think that will be a big deal, how to balance work and family.

The other big balance questions will come involve with how do you keep society together with all the diversity we share, not just gender, but the racial diversity, the cultural diversity, the religious diversity. And women will be uniquely positioned to play a major role in that.

And, finally -- I'll just give one other example because we're running out of time -- how do we balance our obligation to prosper as well as we can and preserve the planet in the face of the evidence on climate change and other things.

So I believe there will be a huge challenge, which is an enormous opportunity for women, in the whole area of our pursuit of happiness properly defined.

When Susan B. Anthony came here in 1906 and gave what turned out to be her last public comment, in a church here in Washington, D.C. -- the last public word she ever uttered was, "Failure is impossible." I am persuaded by the presence of you in this crowd and those whom you represent that on the edge of a new century she's still right.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

END 9:30 P.M. EST