

PHOTOCOPY
PRESERVATION

"Broadway for Hillary" Event
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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND THE FIRST LADY
AT "BROADWAY FOR HILLARY" EVENT

Ford Center
New York, New York

9:30 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Now, you all just relax while I get used to my new role. (Laughter and applause.) Somewhere between the Amen Corner for Jimmy Naughton, the straight man for Rosie and the warm-up for Hillary, I'll figure out something to do. (Laughter.)

Jim, that was a heck of a speech. (Applause.) It's a good thing you didn't file -- Al and Bill would be nervous about that. (Laughter.)

I want to thank all of you for being here tonight. I'm profoundly grateful to everyone who conceived and put together this program, and all the people who gave their time. I remember the "Broadway for Clinton" program back in June of '92. And I remember the people who performed and the people who came, because I was running third in the polls back then. (Laughter.) But, by the time the convention rolled around, everything had changed.

I want to thank Senator Schumer for his remarks and his support; the New York legislative leaders that are here: Speaker Silver, Majority Leader Bragman, Senator Martin Connor; Judith Hope, the state Democratic Chair; our borough President, C. Virginia Fields; the Bronx borough President, Freddy Ferrer; City Council Speaker Peter Vallone; Comptroller Alan Hevesi; and Mark Green, our longtime friend, the Public Advocate. Thank you all very much. (Applause.) And thank you, Rosie, and everyone else who performed.

Jim Naughton said most of the stuff I was going to say -- (laughter) -- and better. So I would just like to say a few things. First, thank you for being so good to us in New York. Thank you for 1992, for the convention, for the vote. Thank you for 1996 -- the largest margin of victory we had in any state in America. Thank you for welcoming us here when we leave the White House. (Applause.) Thank you for being here tonight, not only as supporters but as friends.

October's a great month for us and our family. First, we celebrate, on the 11th, our anniversary. We just had our 24th wedding anniversary. (Applause.) And then we celebrate Hillary's birthday. (Applause.) And now, thanks to your doing this, and the fact we get back about 2:00 in the morning, we expect to have like a 24-hour celebration.

We have been very blessed, Hillary and I, and we've been blessed by our family, our friends, and the opportunity to serve in public life. I am very grateful for all the work that we have done together over all these years. I am very grateful that now my wife has a chance to do what I thought she ought to do 26 years ago when we finished law school.

And I was really afraid, as I have told many of our friends -- and some of our old friends are nodding their heads out there. The only thing that really worried me about our getting married was that somehow she would be denied the opportunity to share her gifts in the most important way. For we have always only cared most, in our work life, about public service. I have watched her for over 30 years give -- I've only watched her for 29 years, but, for 30 years and more -- care passionately about children, and give herself to service.

The first job she had out of law school was with the Children's Defense Fund. She could have gone to work for any number of law firms, but she wanted to help kids. Then she became head of the Legal Services Corporation Board, when President Carter was in office. She then became Chair of the Children's Defense Fund board.

She headed the education reform movement in Arkansas when I was governor. And as First Lady, she has literally inspired tens of millions of mothers and their children all around the world, trying to get a better deal for young girls and their families in poor villages from Africa to Latin America to Asia. (Applause.)

She has been a major force in the passage of legislation that will enable us to ensure over 5 million children with health insurance. It makes it easier for people to adopt children. She has worked on all the things we have done to try to reduce violence against our young people. She has played a major role in all of our reforms in education, early childhood learning, and health care. And in so doing, she has always been willing to do it without getting, really, anything like the credit she deserved for the work she did and the impact she had.

Over all these years, I have seen her driven by a personal sense of responsibility to serve -- partly because she does believe it takes a village to raise a child, or to raise a country.

When we went to Washington in 1992, late '92, about three weeks before the inaugural, we had some ideas that we thought would work to turn our country around in a very troubled time. They were just ideas, just an argument. But the country gave us a chance, and the results have been good. Jimmy Naughton listed some of them.

What I want to say to you tonight in bringing Hillary on is this: in my lifetime, we have never had the chance, as a nation, we have today. The country was going in the wrong direction; now it's going in the right direction. We have the lowest unemployment in 29 years;

the lowest welfare rolls in 30 years; the lowest crime rate in 30 years; first back-to-back surpluses in 42 years; the lowest poverty rate in 20 years. We're moving in the right direction.

But we all know there are these huge challenges out there -- the aging of America, the largest and most diverse group of kids we ever had, the opportunity and the responsibility we have to give poor people a chance to be a part of this prosperity for the first time ever. In my lifetime this has never happened. In the 1960s we had an economy that, for a few years, was maybe about like this. But we had the civil rights crisis, and we had the war in Vietnam, and we became divided and we never got around to doing it.

Now all we have to overcome is the politics of pettiness and personal destruction. We have to lift ourselves out of that as one country, one America.

All the things that Jim said a senator will have to decide are true. But the thing you ought to think about is this: New York has distinct challenges and unprecedented opportunities. Your country has the first chance in your lifetime to imagine, and then to build, the future of our dreams, for our children and for our grandchildren. And it will only happen if we are led by the right people.

I have done everything I could do to leave this country in good shape. There is still a lot more we can do in the next 15 months. But fundamentally, the decisions the voters make in the year 2000, the millennial year, will determine whether we do what so many people do when times are good -- get distracted, become self-indulgent, make short-term and often foolish decisions -- or we seize the chance of a lifetime.

The best gift I can give the American people now is to do my best to make sure that they know that the person I love most in the world is without any doubt the ablest, most passionate, most committed, most visionary public servant I have ever known. (Applause.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well -- (laughter) -- I am so grateful to so many people this evening. And I want to start by thanking your President and my husband. I'm very proud -- I'm very proud -- of the progress our country has made in the last six and a half years under his leadership. And I am very grateful to be here with you. (Applause.)

But as Bill said, there is work to be done. As much progress as we've made, we still have unfinished business. And that is why all of you are here this evening.

And I want to thank the co-chairs of this evening's event. I'm just so grateful to all of you. I want to thank Agnes Gund and Martha Stewart and Paula Schulhof and Sam Waksal and Alan Patricof and Matt Mallow.

I want to thank all of you who worked on the committee for this event. I'm particularly grateful that so many of you worked so hard -- and I have to mention the extraordinary work of Gabrielle Fialkoff, who has done a wonderful job. (Applause.) And I'm also very thankful that there were no votes in Washington tonight, and Senator Schumer could be with us. And I am just absolutely convinced that the trust that the people of New York put in

Chuck Schumer in 1998, and so many here in this beautiful theater worked on his behalf, has been already demonstrated as a very good investment. And the best is yet to come. And I hope that I will have a chance, sometime, to work with Chuck Schumer as well. (Applause.)

And I want to thank, also, Mayor Koch who's here, and who introduced me at an earlier event. (Applause.) And I'm particularly grateful to all the people who put together this extraordinary evening. Fran Weissler and Peter Stone and Marty Bell and Walter Bobbie and Peter Lawrence and John McDaniel, and the absolutely incomparable Rosie O'Donnell, who -- (applause) -- who is not only talented, as everyone who has performed tonight is, and everyone who participated, I am so grateful to you.

I'm particularly pleased, though, that Rosie could be here, because her commitment to children is one that I'm very aware of and support. And really, if I were to just try in a few words to say what I hope this election will be about, and what I hope I can contribute to it, it would be to be a voice for the children of New York -- all of the children of New York, wherever they live -- (applause) -- because since it's impossible for me to escape your knowing how old I am, since that is something that is publicized every year -- (laughter) -- even with advances in modern medicine, probably more than half my life is over.

And I think all of us, at a certain point, begin to wonder what it is we can leave behind, and what kind of obligations and responsibilities we can shoulder. And as I have traveled around New York in the last months, no matter where I have been -- whether it has been in a furniture factory in Jamestown, sitting down talking to the people working there; or in a backyard in Niagara Falls; or at a house party in Queens; or at a dinner party in Great Neck -- everywhere I've been, I've heard the same concerns from people.

I think sometimes there's a, perhaps, misconception that what someone might believe in one part of the state is so different than what might be the idea in another. But time and time again, I've heard about the need to look to our children, to make sure that they have the health care they need, the schools they deserve to have; that their parents have the jobs with the good incomes that we want families, in this time of prosperity, to enjoy; that the environment is clean and that the quality of life is there for them; that they're safe from violence, whether on the streets or in any other form.

And time and time again, I'm reminded that really, if you strip it all away, any vote that anyone in public office, like all of those who are here this evening, or someone in the United States Senate, would ever make, could perhaps best be directed by having them ask themselves, is what I'm doing good for the children?

You know, in Africa there are people in certain tribes who, when they meet each other, they don't say, how are you? They say, how are the children? And here in New York, we have such good news. We have so many bright, wonderful children. But we also have more than 20 percent of our children living in poverty. We have children who are knocking the top off any scholastic measurement, and we have children who go to school in this city in buildings that are falling down, and that are heated by coal -- something from the 19th century.

We have children who have computers in their homes and could probably be hired tomorrow to help do programming for many of the companies represented here. And then we have children who are on the other side of the digital divide. We have children who come from families that are insured, and they get the best of medical care. And then we have young kids in different parts of our state who are struggling for breath as they fight asthma, or they face other medical challenges, without the kind of care that they deserve and need to have.

We also have children who get a little older and find they don't have jobs in upstate New York, and so they leave because they can't stay with their family and their friends, because they don't have the opportunities. And then we have young people who come from literally all over the country and the world, seeking their fortunes here. And they, too, need to have the opportunities that we all hope for our own children and ourselves.

We do have a lot of big decisions that will be facing our country in the months ahead, and many of those decisions will have a direct impact on what happens here in New York. As I've listened and talked with people, I know that the kinds of big decisions that we face -- how to keep this economic prosperity going and extend it to everyone; how to improve public education; how to figure out how to pass a patients' bill of rights and provide good quality health care to every American -- (applause) -- how to make sure that every New Yorker and every American is protected from prejudice and stereotyping and bigotry, and that's one of the reasons we need for this Congress to pass hate crimes legislation. (Applause.)

But it's not only what happens here at home; it's what happens around the world. Will we continue to lead the world; and be the strongest force for peace and security? Well, that to a great extent depends upon the decisions that will be made in the United States Congress -- this year, next year, the years after. We need a Senate that would pass the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. (Applause.) We need a Senate that will fund the Middle East peace process and continue our march towards security and peace. (Applause.)

In so many ways, large and small, if people would ask themselves, is it good for the children, more often than not, the right decisions would be made.

I'm very grateful for the support that you give me tonight. And I'm very excited about this upcoming campaign. In the weeks and months ahead, I will continue to go everywhere I can throughout this state.

I know I still have a lot to learn. But I bring to this effort, as Bill said, more than 30 years of commitment, not just to public service, but to making it possible that every single boy or girl believes that they will have a chance -- they will have an opportunity to go as far as their talents and hard work will take them.

As I sat out in the audience and watched these extraordinary performers, I was thinking about how much work it took for each and every one of them to be up there -- years and years of effort and practice and commitment. Well, isn't that what we want for every young person, every young New Yorker, every young American? That they, too, will be able to find where their talents best suit them? Because they will have had a good education, they will have

been provided with the best possible economic opportunities, and they will be willing, then to become the kind of citizens we need.

To me, public service is really the price one pays for being an American. Some of us may choose to run for office; others vote and support people, and contribute money -- all of it to make this political system that undergirds our democracy work for yet another century.

Well, I'm honored to be standing in front of you, asking you for your support, thanking you for what you've given -- and really pledging to you that if we work together, we will not only build on the progress of the last years, but make it possible for us to see better days ahead for New York and America.

Thank you all very much. (Applause.)

END

9:52 P.M. EDT