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St. Patrick's Day Recep.

FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON  
BRIEF REMARKS AT ST. PATRICK'S DAY RECEPTION  
THE WHITE HOUSE  
MARCH 17, 2000

*As Prepared.*

Thank you all. Happy St. Patrick's Day and welcome to the White House. Before we begin, I want to thank all of the amazing performers who have filled the White House with poetry and music and dance this evening: Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney; the New Century Celi Band; the Step Dancers and Musicians; Robert White and his accompanist Brian Zeger [ZEE-ger], and the Belfast Handbell Choir, who have shown what is possible when children defy generations of hatred to sing together in peace. Please join me in giving all of our performers another round of applause.

This is our last St. Patrick's Day event of this Administration. And, I want to thank everyone who has come here to make it the very best. We are delighted to be joined this evening by Senator Mitchell; Prime Minister Ahern; party leaders; Members of the Cabinet and Members of Congress.

This is an event that Bill and I look forward every year. Maybe it's because we get to see so many Irish Americans, friends of Ireland, and Irish guests all together in one place. Maybe it's because, and I certainly speak for myself here, that it's the one day we all get to be Irish.

And maybe its because, we are reminded yet again that Ireland is a part of all of us -- part of our country's past and future, part of our dreams and hopes for peace.

And, that has certainly never been more important than now. I will always remember that first trip to Ireland that Bill and I took in 1995...especially the thousands of people who filled the streets. We have seen -- and learned -- so much since then. We have seen that the peace, once imagined by poets and prophets, is possible. We have seen -- especially in the last few months -- that the road to peace will have its bumps and setbacks. And we have seen that peace must be made not only among leaders, but also among citizens...those women and men -- who lived for, died for, fought for, and yes, voted for a new future.

I have often talked about the women I've met in Northern Ireland through our government's Vital Voices initiative. It was these women -- and others like them -- who used to say a silent prayer for a husband or child to come home safely. It was these women who decided to end the violence and bloodshed, knowing that what they had in common was far more important than what drove them apart. And it is these women who must now be full participants in building a peaceful, prosperous, Northern Ireland.

Many of them are here with us today – and I want to welcome them. We just came from a small gathering, where the American Ireland Fund presented a generous contribution to Vital Voices in Northern Ireland. So, behalf of all those women and men, boys and girls whose communities will be safer, whose lives will be better, I want to publicly thank the American Ireland Fund.

Yeats once wrote: “I have spread my dreams under your feet. Tread softly, because you tread on my dreams.” Those words could have been spoken by the children of Northern Ireland. It is their dreams that we must tread softly on, their dreams we must fulfill.

And no one has worked harder to do that than the President. Since we first came here, seven plus years ago, I have watched him work day and night for peace in Northern Ireland. Our many wonderful trips together to Belfast and Dublin and other places have only strengthened his resolve. And, I know that he will work until his very last day in office...and his very last days on this earth...to make sure that all children can grow up together in peace. It is my great honor to introduce my husband, the President of the United States, Bill Clinton.