

Women's Caucus
Convention

**FIRST LADY HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON
REMARKS TO THE WOMEN'S CAUCUS
OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION
AUGUST 26, 1996**

Welcome to my hometown, a city of extraordinarily talented women.

Please bear with me as I pay homage to one local girl who prepared me to make the choices that were right for my life -- who always held me to high standards -- who supported me unfailingly. She is Dorothy Rodham. How proud I am that she has come home with me this week to see my husband, her son-in-law, renominated as President of the United States.

Today, as the country turns its attention to the Presidential campaign, Chicago will dedicate a park to another native daughter -- a true American heroine -- Jane Addams. She was a renowned social theorist, a skilled political operative who still inspires us to believe in the power women have when they are galvanized into a movement for change.

Jane Addams's Hull House was, if you'll pardon the expression, a true village. It remains an enduring model of a dynamic public-private partnership that addressed social need by providing poor families with the kind of assistance that fosters self-reliance, competence, and above all, good citizenship.

Come to think of it, Jane Addams was just about perfect in all respects except one. She was a Republican. But even Democratic women in her day forgave her for that. Eleanor Roosevelt was inspired by her and by what she stood for. I know because Eleanor Roosevelt and I have had several conversations about it.

Just about everywhere I go, it seems Mrs. Roosevelt has been there before me. And once again, here I am in Chicago, at the Democratic Convention, and I find Mrs. Roosevelt was here 56 years ago. She had come to nominate her husband for a third term as President way back in 1940. And if you think the Republicans this year are beating up unfairly on Bill Clinton, you should hear what they had to say about Franklin Roosevelt!

Some things never do change, I guess.

What a great day this is as we gather for the Democratic Convention and officially begin the campaign that will reelect President Clinton and Vice President Gore to an historic second term.

What an astonishing accident of history that this day should coincide with Women's Equality Day and the 76th Anniversary of the victory for women's suffrage.

What a force women have become in American politics!

As so many of you know, it took 76 long years for American women to win the right to vote. But we have come a long way in the 76 years since.

We are finally fulfilling the essential promise of those intrepid suffragists who fought so hard and so long to secure women their due rights as citizens. We are finally realizing their vision of a public life enriched and expanded by the full range of women's talents, interests and values.

American women went in droves to the polls in 1992. We voted overwhelmingly for Bill Clinton and Al Gore. And for the first time, with the help of our now fabled EMILY's List, we raised more money than any other single political action group. And we elected more women to office in their own right than ever before.

Sure, some women grew skeptical and stayed home from the polls in 1994, and you all know what happened as a result. But American women overall remain a powerful progressive force in American politics.

So guess what? In case you haven't noticed, even the Republicans have suddenly begun to pay attention.

Issues of long concern to women -- economic security, crime, health, education, child care, and choice -- have emerged as the central questions driving American political life.

The Republican Party is trying to get the women's vote. But we women can't be fooled, can we? Of course not, and the reason is simple.

Bill Clinton in his first term has accomplished more for American women -- more for American people -- than any other modern American president.

-- Ten million more jobs in America than we had in 1992, and that's good news for women who now make up nearly half our workforce.

-- The lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in America in 27 years, and that's good news for women who have to worry about making ends meet.

-- The federal deficit cut nearly in half, and that's good news for women who are anxious about their children's futures.

President Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act in 1993, and that's good news for 12 million American men and women who've had to take time off to care for an ailing child, spouse or parent.

President Clinton raised the minimum wage and expanded the Earned Income Tax Credit, so that it pays again to work again in America. And that's especially good news for those two-thirds of minimum wage workers who are women.

He signed the Kassebaum-Kennedy health insurance reform bill into law. This legislation is a long-overdue victory for millions of Americans who lived in fear of losing their health insurance when they changed or lost their jobs, or who couldn't even get insurance because a family member had a chronic illness or a pre-existing condition.

President Clinton has granted more federal loans to small businesses than ever before, and that's good news for women business owners who are creating more new jobs than the entire Fortune 500.

President Clinton significantly expanded student loans, job training, and apprentice programs, and that's good news for women who are still struggling toward full equality in the workplace.

President Clinton passed a crime bill that is placing thousands more police on the streets of their communities, while also restricting gun purchases and banning assault weapons. And that's good news for American women who worry about their family's safety.

President Clinton is committed to ensuring universal access to reproductive health and family planning services and to protecting a woman's right to choose, and that's good news for all women.

And don't forget that this President has appointed more women to office than any President before him, from Janet Reno to Ruth Bader Ginsberg; from the armed forces to the White House to the federal bench and beyond.

His has been an unparalleled and distinctive record of commitment to women as full partners in decision-making.

Nowhere was this more evident than last year in Beijing, when U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright and Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala joined me in leading a diverse and forceful delegation of American men and women to the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women. There the Clinton Administration let the peoples of the world know that women everywhere must enjoy human rights and dignity. And we are working hard to make sure that the goals of the Beijing Conference are fulfilled and that here and abroad it is understood that:

"Women's rights are human rights -- and human rights are women's rights."

President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore will stand for nothing less.

Now I'm the first to admit that I'm not very objective about my husband and his Administration.

Maybe it's because I see Bill Clinton every day as a man, not just as a President.

Maybe it's because I see him every day as the son of a woman who raised him alone, against great odds, but always with a deep, abiding love that to this day secures his essential sense of confidence, optimism, and well-being.

Maybe it's because I see him every day as the supportive husband of a wife who still tries everyday, as so many of you do, to combine family and work obligations.

Maybe it's because I see him every day as the adoring father of our wonderful teenage daughter.

Maybe, it's because I see him as a man, not just as a President.

Which is why I am confident that Americans everywhere -- ever sensible, ever practical, ever wise Americans -- will keep him as their President for four more years.

So let's all get going and get to work on this campaign.

We've got a big job ahead.

Thank you for all you are doing. Good luck and godspeed.

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