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May 11, 2008

Remarks on Mother's Day in Grafton, WV

Good afternoon. Oh my goodness.

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This is just such a pleasure and we are thrilled to be here. What better place to spend Mother's Day than here in Grafton, not far from the Andrews Methodist Church, where the very first Mother's Day was celebrated 100 years ago. So this is the hundredth anniversary and I want to thank all of you for spending part of this day with us here at the B and O Railroad Heritage Center. I want to thank the County Commission President Dave Goebel for being here and all the elected officials who are here with us. It is exciting to be here with my daughter too, because whether you're a son or a daughter, or in fact, a father or a mother, or maybe a grandfather or a grandmother " or even a great grandparent, you know that you're part of an ongoing celebration every mother's day that began as a simple commemoration of a West Virginia woman and that's what I think is so special.

When I walked through the home and saw where Ann Maria Reeves Jarvis lived, and there's so much there that is authentic and of period, it really did touch my heart. I was told by Tom and Olive who were taking us through that people come sometimes every Mother's Day, they bring friends and relatives from out of the area to experience this real walk back through history. I was inspired when I first read about Ann Maria and how she worked so hard to raise her family like so many women in those days. She had ten children but only four survived. She taught Sunday School. I also learned that she was a Methodist like I am and her husband was a Baptist like my husband. For 52 years of marriage they never went to church together.

Well, Bill and I have done that a few times. They eventually, under the leadership of Ann Maria, organized what were called Mothers' Work Days and they worked to improve sanitation and health conditions and raise funds for medicine, and try to care for women with tuberculosis. They inspected bottled milk and food and treated wounded soldiers, both Yankee and Confederate. The upstairs bedroom, which is the guest bedroom, there is both the grey and the blue on the bedspread because they cared for any wounded soldier; it was safe passage if they made it to the Jarvis home. That was very inspiring to me. She had a tremendous sense of duty and obligation and her story might have been lost in history had her own daughter not come forward with the idea of Mother's Day and to honor her and all mothers for the contributions.

So as we look at the mothers and the grandmothers who are gathered here today and as we think about the tens of millions of mothers across our country who are busy taking care of their children, doing their jobs, supporting their communities and living lives of faith and service, we are reminded from generation to generation that our progress often come from the hard work, determination and the tenacity of women.

I wanted to begin by saluting my own mother who couldn't be here, because my mother, as some of you may have heard me say or read in my book, didn't have the benefit of a stable family growing up. Her parents were unable to care for their two young daughters and were divorced in the 1920s which wasn't very comment back then. My eight year old mother and her five year old sister were sent away on a train all by themselves from Chicago to California to live with grandparents who had little interest in raising them.

So when my mother was about 14, she left that home and was hired as a live'in helper by a woman who encouraged and supported her. My mom took care of the children in the morning, got them off to school, then she could go to high school, she would come right back and take care of them when the kids got home from school. She never had the chance to go to college, but she was determined that her own children would have that chance.

As I grew older and learned more about my mother's own story, it really impressed upon me more fully what it took for her to forge ahead in the face of life's challenges. I saw how hard she worked every single day to support my father and our family, to raise me and my brothers, and to be involved in teaching Sunday School to helping out at the neighborhood school.

Statement from the Clinton Campaign
6/3/2008

HUBdate: Election Day in South Dakota and Montana
6/3/2008

Wyoming Automatic Delegate Backs Hillary
6/3/2008

Response to VP Inquiry
6/3/2008

Louisiana Democratic Party Chair and Automatic Delegate Chris Whittington Endorses Hillary
6/2/2008

Statement from Hillary Clinton On Gay Pride Month
6/2/2008

New York Automatic Delegate Endorses Hillary
6/2/2008

My mother didn't have the luxury to put up her feet and take a breather. She just kept going, kept working, kept meeting her responsibilities and pursuing her dreams for her children so that we could have opportunities that she, and prior generations, never ever dreamed of. She wasn't alone.

Judging from the mothers I meet across our country, I've come to believe that hard work, determination and resiliency are encoded in our DNA. We know we have the "worrying" gene. We know we have the "put your coat on because it's cold outside" gene. Well, we also have the "stand up and fight for what you believe in" gene.

Take, for example, my grandmother, my father's mother, Hannah Jones. She was a formidable woman. She died when I was quite young but I have vivid memories of her. She was the kind of woman who never took no for an answer.

And one time, when my father and a friend were hitching a ride on the back of an ice truck, and their feet were dangling over the back of it, the truck came to an abrupt halt and skidded and smashed into something crushing my father's feet. He was rushed to the hospital, word went out to Hannah that her son had been seriously injured. She got to the hospital only to be met by doctors who said that they had to amputate his feet. Hannah said no. And she barricaded my father and herself in their hospital room, would not let anyone in until her brother-in-law who happened to be a doctor arrived and then she basically browbeat him into agreeing to save my father's feet. My father went on to play football in high school and college. They did a good job, I think. But if it hadn't been for that mother saying "no, you're not going to do this," my father's life would have been so much different.

So when I think of Hannah, I think of the mother who is working to help her child who is labeled a failure in school until he finally experiences success. I think of the mother who petitions the mayor or the city council or the police chief to demand more protection for children when they are outside playing in the neighborhood. Or the mother who takes matters into her own hands and sends body armor to her son or daughter in Iraq when the military didn't provide it.

This is not a new phenomenon. Women have been standing up for what we believe in, defying convention, and going forward for a long time. What about the brave suffragists who didn't abandon their fight for the right to vote even when they were ostracized and harassed and thrown in jail? What about Harriet Tubman, who wouldn't back down in the face of danger as she led slaves out of bondage on an underground railroad? What about Dolores Huerta, who helped to found the United Farm Workers and worked long and very unglamorous hours as a grassroots activist to bring dignity to the lives of other mothers? What about Sally Ride, who wouldn't give up her dream of soaring into space when women were told they didn't have the "right stuff" to become astronauts? What about the women around the world like the extraordinary Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who became the president of Liberia in 2005 and whose leadership has literally helped to mother a wounded and suffering nation?

I find inspiration from all of these women and from their stories and I find inspiration as I travel around West Virginia and America. I find inspiration from the mothers and grandmothers I meet every single day. I was in Indiana toward the end of the campaign; in fact it was the very last event we did in Evansville. We were in a high school gym, hundreds of people were there and after I spoke I was shaking hands and I came upon a beaming glowing mother, standing next to the wheelchair which her son, who was incredibly, profoundly disabled. She introduced me with such love and pride to her son.

And he could be well understood by me but she could understand everything he was saying. She proceeded to interpret for him how excited he was about this campaign. And how he knew exactly what I was saying across Indiana. Jobs, jobs, jobs. And he said it over and over and over again.

I think of all of these mothers who take whatever life throws at us, gets up every morning, gets the kids ready for school, does the laundry, buys the groceries, cooks the dinners, helps on the homework and maybe works a day shift, a nightshift or a double shift. And mothers who tell their daughters "you are just as smart and capable as anyone else and don't ever think you aren't." Women who ask the PTA "why don't we do more to get girls into math and science classes." Women who dare to compete in the board room and the back room, the locker room and the newsroom, the halls of academia and the corridors of political power. Through their perseverance and resilience these women are standing up for the bedrock principle of American democracy " the promise of opportunity for anyone who is willing to work hard and pursue their dreams. That is a principle and a promise that must always include girls and women.

Now, if you are a woman of a certain age, as I am, you have likely experienced a moment along the way when your own sense of limitless possibility collided with a harsher reality. For me, it was a small moment.

I was a teenager; I dreamed of being an astronaut. So I wrote to NASA to volunteer for astronaut training and find out what you had to do to be prepared. I got a letter back: Girls were just not accepted into the program. The truth is, given my poor eyesight and very, very modest athletic abilities, I would have never been accepted in any event. But the rejection, however small, carried a

message. I hadn't realized until then that anyone be denied an opportunity simply on the basis of being a girl.

Later, in a class of 235 students at law school, I was one of only 27 women enrolled, at that time the largest group ever. Today women are the majority of students in law school. But I remember when I was just starting my legal career and a colleague advised me not to be a trial lawyer because, he said, I had no way of getting the one thing every trial lawyer needed. When I asked him what, he said, "a wife." I said, "Really?" Very seriously he said, "When you're in a long trial and you're busy, who's going to make sure you have clean socks for court?" I had honestly never thought of that and I had always washed my socks myself. So it didn't seem like it would be that big an obstacle.

Thankfully, I, like generations of women today, are able to make our own choices because other women stood up and demanded that for us. I often think about how much lives have changed for women since when my own mother was born in 1919, when I was born in 1947, and when Chelsea was born in 1980.

We've made an enormous amount of progress. Women are now neurosurgeons and NASCAR drivers, judges and generals, CEOs and CPAs.

But it's also true that the higher you go up in the ranks, the thinner it becomes, whether it's business, or law, or politics, or other fields. Women still face a lot of barriers, some visible, some invisible.

In 2008 it's really important we recommit ourselves to making sure that our daughters and our sons have an equal chance to lead and serve in the future.

Over the past few days I've gotten emails from around the country from people offering words of encouragement and advice. One man from California wrote: "Keep fighting. No matter what the outcome may be, the fact that you stood throughout the constant ups and downs in this race, one thing is sure: You never wavered and you never gave up."

A woman named Linda said, Linda wrote and said: "Don't give up. I'm supporting you looking at my girls and knowing that when the going gets tough, you keep forging ahead."

A Californian wrote, "For the sake of all future and current mothers everywhere, keep your head up and keep on in this race, keep fighting, I am with you all the way." But I guess my favorite message was from a woman named Angela. "Keep strong," she said, "it's not over until the lady in the pantsuit says it is."

I share that, because the underlying lesson is not so much about me but about all of us. About whether or not we do stay with what we start, whether or not we can make progress if we don't commit ourselves to it and see it through, unless we are willing to stand in the face of adversity. The same is true for our country. We need to rise to the challenges facing us, no matter how daunting, and take care of the unfinished business before America.

Unfinished business that resonates not only for women but for all of us - for children whose lives and well-being is affected because their mother is paid lower wages than male counterparts doing the same job. For husbands who share the burdens placed on a family when a woman can't get maternity leave or get a bank loan or qualify for a decent pension. For fathers who want their daughters to have the same opportunities as their sons - to compete at sports, or be engineers, or fly jets or break any barrier to be whatever they dream, including president of the United States.

It's unfinished business that we see everyday in the headlines, the supermarket lines, the bank lines, the emergency room lines. The question before us as a nation is whether we will forge ahead with that sense of resilience and purpose that has always marked America. Will we address the mortgage crisis so more families don't lose their homes? Will we finally achieve health care so that every single American has quality, affordable health care?

Will we get serious about reducing our dependence on foreign oil? Will we tackle the gas prices that are going up astronomically? Will we stop shipping American jobs overseas? Will we adopt green energy policies including clean coal that will make economic sense and protect us, and our children's children? Will we make college affordable again for the young people who are now being shut out of going to college? Will we end No Child Left Behind, which is not working? Will we bring our troops home from Iraq and end this war that has cost thousands of lives and billions of dollars?

Will we take care of those who have taken care of us - our veterans. West Virginia has the highest proportion of veterans anywhere in our country.

I am running for president because I believe we can answer all of those questions. I know we can achieve solutions to fix our economy and create new jobs and safeguard people's homes from foreclosure, relieve the burden of soaring food and gas prices. I believe we can bring our troops home with honor, following a strategy that is smart and safe starting within 60 days of my becoming president. I believe we can once again see good jobs with rising incomes, to do more to support children and families, especially in places like West Virginia.

And for just a moment, I'd like to mention your wonderful Senior Senator, Senator Robert C. Byrd. Many of you know that Senator Byrd lost his mother when he was only 1 year old. He grew up in poverty, but was fortunate to be taken in by an aunt and uncle who gave him the love and foundation of family. Every year around Mother's Day, Senator Byrd gives a speech on the Senate floor in appreciation of mothers. When I came to the Senate, and my mother spent a lot of time with us, she now lives with us, she used to watch C'Span all the time to see if she could catch a glimpse of me - to be very honest about it. And she fell in love with Senator Byrd. And a few years ago I took her to have lunch with Senator Byrd in his office and she told him how much she appreciated his Mother's Day speeches.

In 2003, he said something so cogent that I just want to repeat it here. "That the best mothers invest the best of themselves in their families - they are high'stake brokers, and we, their families, are the stocks on their exchange. If we simply try our best, she will consider the return on her investment to be well met."

One of the poems he read that year was "Like Mother, Like Son". Although he barely had a chance to know his mother, to this day he still feels her gentle presence, her soft urging to do his best to make her proud.

Bill and I often talk about the challenges he faced in his family - when after his father died before he was born, his mother had to leave him to go to school to become a nurse. He was left with her parents while she was away. And there is such a poignant picture of him being taken to go visit his mother who was in nursing school in New Orleans. And he is about 3 years old and he is all dressed up in a little suit that his grandmother had bought for him for the trip. And I remember his mother, Virginia, telling me that she was so happy to see him but it was so heartbreaking when he left on the train going back to Arkansas. One of Bill's earliest memories is seeing his mother drop to her knees and just sobbing as her son left. But she was there to get a better education so she could take better care of him. I know Bill, like Senator Byrd and millions of sons across America, as well as daughters from coast to coast, carry their mother's love with them everyday.

I think there is more we can do to make sure that young parents are not so stressed out. It is hard raising children today. There are so many demands - the jobs don't pay what they used to, which means that usually you have to have both parents working, don't you? If you are a single mom, honestly, I think you are a miracle worker to be able to manage the family and a job at the same time. I think we should do more to help young families -I would like to see us experiment in our country with what other countries have.

And that is not only expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act, so that we protect more families in times of emergency. I am very proud that millions and millions of people have taken advantage of that, the first bill that my husband signed. But we need to expand it because right now it cuts off at 50 employees - we need to bring that down to 25 employees because when you have a newborn baby, or you adopt a baby, or your spouse or yourself is sick, or your parent is sick, it is terrible having to make a choice between losing your job and taking care of your loved one. I just worked to pass legislation which we have passed to extend the Family and Medical Leave to the families of wounded soldiers. Because so many of them, when they are brought back to the country they need extensive and lengthily care, and they need their families by their side. So we're going to make sure we protect their jobs and I'd like that to be available for more people. Here in West Virginia, that would help a lot of West Virginians.

I also want to push for something that is not available in very many places today. That is some form of paid leave for limited purposes, because what happens now with unpaid leave is that if you can't afford to go from your job, you can't take it even if it is available to you. If we had a small limited program of paid leave that the federal government would work with the states to provide, 490,000 workers in West Virginia in the private sector might be eligible.

I also think it is important we look at the end of life and the beginning of life together. We need more child'care for families. We have 64,000 children under six in West Virginia that don't have good child'care. But we also have many, many families taking care of loved ones and they don't get much help doing it. The average family in America taking care of a child with a disability, a spouse with Alzheimer's, a parent with Parkinson's, will spend at least \$5,000 out of pocket taking care of that loved one. I think we should give a \$3,000 caregiver tax credit so that families are not put at a financial disadvantage for doing what they are doing out of love and dedication.

I also would like to see us make it easier and less expensive to buy long'term care policies. It's one of the biggest concerns families have What happens if my parent or my grandparent or my spouse is no longer able to take care of him or herself and I physically can't do it any longer and don't have any help to do it. How can we get some long'term care in the home or in some other setting? And I think we should have a long'term care tax credit, as well, so people can buy long'term care insurance.

On all of these issues, it really does matter whether we are going to care for one another. And I think it is interesting that this holiday we start today was the idea of a woman, right here in Grafton. Anna Jarvis prevailed against the odds. If you were to come with an idea right now for a national

holiday and you persevered for nine or ten years like she did, it would be a labor of love. And that is what it sometimes does take to make the changes that are going to benefit us.

I want to just end by spotlighting another mother, because this whole question of equal pay for equal work really is at the core of my belief that we have got to get to equality in the workplace. Lily Ledbetter was a mother who raised her two children while working at a tire factory in Alabama. For almost two decades, before she learned she was being paid far less than her male counterparts doing the same job. She sued under the Equal Pay Act, which has been in existence for 40 years. The Supreme Court, controlled by the new Bush Chief Justice threw her case out. They said she didn't file the complaint soon enough. The only problem was she hadn't known until after all those years she wasn't being paid the same. You don't go up to your fellow employees and say show me your pay stub. You just don't do that. The information was a secret.

So we tried to fix that loophole in the Senate a few weeks ago but the Republicans blocked us. I want people to remember that in this upcoming election season. Because when women in workplaces are discriminated against, paid lower wages than they deserve, that affects their husbands, it affects their children, it affects the family income. When women make \$.77 on a dollar for a man and a mom goes to the grocery store, the checkout counter person doesn't say, you only make \$.70, so we are going to cut the cost of the groceries by 25%. That doesn't happen. So we have got to remedy that.

And there is a lot of other unfinished business. But it is exciting to know that we are here on the hundredth anniversary of this celebration. And in two days, the voters of West Virginia will join the tens of millions of Americans who have already cast their vote for president.

I am asking for your support so that I can continue to fight for you and fight to finish the work that we have started. I would not be standing here if it were not for all the women who went before. Not only the women in my own life, like my mother and my grandmother, or my wonderful daughter whom I am so thrilled to have with me here today, but it is also because of countless women and men whose names we may never know who really believed strongly in what they thought would make their community and their country better places.

So I leave you today with a Mother's Day message I received a few days ago from a 23 year old young woman in Kentucky: "Happy Mother's Day," She wrote, "Hopefully I will be wishing you one next year as president. You have already succeeded as the world's hardest job, being a mother. The second hardest job should be a breeze for you."

Happy Mother's Day everybody.