Hillary Clinton, *It Takes A Village*, DNC Address (Democratic National Convention), 27 agosto 1996

After this reception, I think you all are ready for the rest of this convention, which has already been so positive and good. I know and you know that Chicago is my kind of town. And Chicago is my kind of village.

I have so many friends here, people who have been important to me all my life. And it seems like every single one of them has given me advice on this speech. One friend suggested that I appear here tonight with Binti, the child saving gorilla from theBrookfield zoo.

You know, as this friend explained, Binti is a typical Chicagoan, tough on the outside but with a heart of gold underneath.

Another friend advised me that I should cut my hair and color it orange and then change my name to Hillary Rodman Clinton.

But, after considering these and countless other suggestions, I decided to do tonight what I've been doing for more than 25 years. I want to talk about what matters most in our lives and in our nation, children and families.

I wish we could be sitting around a kitchen table, just us, talking about our hopes and fears about our children's futures. For Bill and me, family has been the center of our lives. But we also know that our family like your family is part of a larger community that can help or hurt our best efforts to raise our child.

Right now in our biggest cities and our smallest towns there are boys and girls being tucked gently into bed, and there are boys and girls who have no one to call mom or dad and no place to call home.

Right now there are mothers and fathers just finishing a long days work and there are mothers and fathers just going to work, some to their second or third jobs of day. Right now there are parents worrying, what if the babysitter is sick tomorrow or how can we pay for college this fall. And right now there are parents despairing about gang members and drug pushers on the corners in their neighborhoods. Right now there are parents questioning a popular culture that glamorizes sex and violence, smoking and drinking and teaches children that the logos on their clothes are more valued than the generosity in their hearts.

But also, right now, there are dedicated teachers preparing their lessons for the new school year.

There are volunteers tutoring and coaching children. There are doctors and nurses caring for sick children, police officers working to help kids stay out of trouble and off drugs. Of course, parents first and foremost are responsible for their children. But we are all responsible for ensuring that children are raised in a nation that doesn't just talk about family values, but acts in ways that values families.

Just think -- as Christopher Reeve so eloquently reminded us last night, we are all part of one family, the American family, and each one of us has value. Each child who comes into this world should feel special -- every body and every girl. Our daughter Chelsea will graduate from college in 2001 at the dawn of the next century. Though that's not so far away, it is hard for any of us to know what the world will look like then, much less when Chelsea is my age in the year 2028.

But one thing we know for sure is that change is certain. Progress is not. Progress depends on the choices we make today for tomorrow and on whether we meet our challenges and protect

our values. We can start by doing more to support parents and the job they have to do. Issues affecting children and families are some of the hardest we face as parents, as citizens, as a nation.

In October, Bill and I will celebrate our 21st wedding anniversary. Bill was with me when Chelsea was born in the delivery room, in my hospital room and when we brought our baby daughter home. Not only did I have lots of help, I was able to stay in the hospital as long as my doctor thought I needed to be there.

But today, too many new mothers are asked to get up and get out after 24 hours, and that is just not enough time for many new mothers and babies. That's why the President is right to support a bill that would prohibit the practice of forcing mothers and babies to leave the hospital in less than 48 hours.

That's also why more hospitals ought to install 24-hour hotlines to answer questions once new mothers and fathers get home.

That's why home nurses can make such a difference to parents who may not have grandparents or aunts and uncles around to help. We have to do whatever it takes to help parents meet their responsibilities at home and at work.

The very first piece of legislation that my husband signed into law had been vetoed twice -- the Family and Medical Leave Law. That law allows parents time off for the birth or adoption of a child or for family emergencies without fear of losing their jobs. Already it has helped 12 million families, and it hasn't hurt the economy one bit.

You know, Bill and I are fortunate that our jobs have allowed us to take breaks from work, not only when Chelsea was born, but to attend her school events and take her to the doctor. But millions of other parents can't get time off. That's why my husband wants to expand the Family and Medical Leave Law so that parents can take time off for children's doctors appointments and parent-teacher conferences at school.

We all know that raising kids is a full-time job, and since most parents work, they are, -- we are -- stretched thin. Just think about what many parents are responsible for on any given day -- packing lunches; dropping the kids off at school; going to work; checking to make sure that the kids get home from school safely; shopping for groceries; making dinner; doing the laundry; helping with homework; paying the bills.

And I didn't even mention taking the dog to the vet. That's why my husband wants to pass a flex-time law that will give parents the option to take overtime pay either in extra income or in extra time off, depending upon which is ever best for your family.

Our family has been lucky to have been blessed with a child with good health. Chelsea has spent only one night in the hospital after she had her tonsils out. But Bill and I couldn't sleep at all that night.

But our experience was nothing like the emotional strain on parents when their children are seriously ill. They often worry about where they will get the money to pay the medical bills. That is why my husband has always felt that all American families should have affordable health insurance. Just last week the President signed a bill sponsored by Senators Kennedy and Kassebaum, a Democrat and a Republican that will enable 25 million Americans to keep their health insurance even when they switch jobs or lose a job or a have a family member who's been sick.

This bill contains some of the key provisions from the President's proposal for health care reform. It was an important step achieved only after both parties agreed to build, not block progress on making health care available to all Americans. Now the country must take the next

step of helping unemployed Americans and their children keep health insurance for six months after losing their jobs.

If you loose your job it's bad enough. But your daughter shouldn't have to loose her doctor too. And our nation still must find a way to offer affordable health care coverage to the working poor and the ten million children who lack health insurance today.

The President also hasn't forgotten that there are thousands of children languishing in foster care who can't be returned home. That's why he signed legislation last week that provides for a 5,000 dollar tax credit for parents who adopt a child. It also abolishes the barriers to cross-racial adoptions. Never again will a racial barrier stand in the way of a family's love.

My husband also understands that parents are their child's first teachers. Not only do we need to read to our children and talk to them in way that encourage learning, we must support our teachers and our schools in deeds as well as words.

The President announced today an important initiative, called America Reads. This initiative is aimed at making sure all children can read well by the third grade. It will require volunteers, but I know there are thousands and thousands of Americans will volunteer to help every child read well.

For Bill and me, there has been no experience more challenging, more rewarding and more humbling than raising our daughter. And we have learned that to raise a happy, healthy, and hopeful child, it takes a family. It takes teachers. It takes clergy.

It takes business people. It takes community leaders. It takes those who protect our health and safety. It takes all of us. Yes, it takes a village. And it takes a President.

It takes a President who believes not only in the potential of his own child, but of all children, who believes not only in the strength of his own family, but of the American family who believes not only in the promise of each of us as individuals, but in our promise together as a nation.

It takes a President who not only holds these beliefs, but acts on them. It takes Bill Clinton.

Sometimes late at night, when I see Chelsea doing her homework or watching TV or talking to a friend on the phone, I think to myself her life and the lives of millions of boys and girls will be better because of what all of us are doing together.

They will face fewer obstacles and more possibilities. That is something we should all be proud of. And that is what this election is all about.

Thank you very much.

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