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REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY  
INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL KELLY, THE NEW YORK TIMES

MRS. CLINTON: (Inaudible) that are in between trees and large bushes. But this is after the tourists take the tours (inaudible) real pleasant place. We had a lot of damage from the bad old blizzard. It knocked down the arbor, and it knocked a few limbs off the trees. We're trying to repair that. That's where we would have sat if that had been nicely fixed. That's really what I want to get back to the way it was. But I think that's really (inaudible).

Q Okay. Let me turn this on and --

MRS. CLINTON: Okay.

Q Well, I hope we can just pick up on the same sort of thing we were talking about in our last conversation. And one thing I didn't get a chance to ask you about that I've been curious about is the timing of the speech in Texas where you put a lot of these thoughts together and (inaudible) know of now.

And you suggested in that that -- or I thought I saw suggested in it -- that it may have had something -- the timing may have been triggered in some way by a reflection of your father's illness. And I wanted to ask you if I was right about that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that that -- you know, that is right, that it was a time of a lot of thought and contemplation. I have given speeches or talked about those issues many times before, but rarely in a reported form or rarely with the kind of backdrop of my own experience, as it was in Austin that day. So it's -- yes, I think it was connected.

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Q And may I ask you what was sort of the chain of reflection that led you to doing that, just sitting down in the plane and starting to scribble the notes?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it was really -- oh, I mean, it was a long period of reflection that has been going on, for me, for a long time.

And if I can get my sun glasses, I'd be better off in somehow blocking -- see, putting sunglasses helps me -- prevents me from sneezing.

Q (Inaudible) antihistamines out here.

MRS. CLINTON: No, my eyes don't water, which is what triggers it for me. I don't know why.

It was a much longer process for us. But, you know, I had just been with my family and spending most of the hours that I had at the hospital. That gives you a lot of time to think and to talk with friends and members of your family.

So a lot of these ideas were really in the forefront of my mind. I wasn't preoccupied, as we all get sometimes, with just the daily problems that confront us. And I didn't really pay any attention to the speech until it was upon me; that was the other thing.

I didn't really think I was going to go until the very last minute. And then, when Sunday and Monday came -- I went back to Little Rock Sunday night. And when I started, you know, catching up on what was going on and realized that the speech that I was expected to give was to a very big group -- and it was part of an overall theme of changing society -- it just kind of triggered in my own mind a lot mind a lot of these thoughts that I had been having anyway. So it was a real meeting of a lot of things that (inaudible).

Q But these are the things that you've been, I gather, thinking and reading and talking to people about for a long time.

I was talking to Ed Matthews in Little Rock the other day, and he said that you had been reading writings on the subject, theological writings, people like Paul Tillich.

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He said you had read a great deal of Wesley yourself, people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, for years and years. I wanted to ask you about that. What kind of readings have you done, and how have they influenced you?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I have done a lot of reading ever since high school and college and then just kind of at a steady rate all the way through the last 20-some years. And, you know, they've influenced me a lot. I mean it is very helpful to see how people put into words what is often, for most of us, inarticulate or inarticulable and to be part of what I feel is an ongoing conversation about their spiritual life and social obligations, all of the conditions that we're interested, and this is so important.

And there are specific -- you know, you asked me about that speech in Austin -- I know that I have used both the Atwater and the Schweitzer quotes several times and have used other ones like that to make the same point. It was often what I talked about in high school baccalaureates, not that anybody would have ever really paid any attention, but it was, you know, my five minutes of uninterrupted time to basically share with a lot of the kids who were there some of the things that I've thought about ever since I was their age and how it fits into my life today.

Q How many people though think about those sorts of things when they are that age -- you know, 15 or 16 or 17 -- you know, the meaning-of-life questions and then slowly drop them -- and drop them, I think, for good by the time they're in their maybe late 20s or 30s. We get on with -- we start thinking about the meaning of mowing the lawn rather than -- and, I mean, it is unusual to talk to somebody who is still trying to puzzle it through after 25 years of thinking.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think a lot more people think about all of those issues than maybe talk about what they think about. And I think some people are perhaps intimidated by feeling they are all alone in their thoughts.

And I find often that I have unexpected conversations, little snippets of time with somebody in which some really interesting insight is shared from an unlikely person.

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I mean, one of the great gifts of being in Little Rock for those two weeks, under what were difficult personal circumstances, is that in a situation like that people feel free to share with you what their deepest feelings are. You know, they may not if it's around a dinner table or if somebody is out mowing the lawn. But when they drop by to see you at the hospital or when they bring a meal to your mother's house, you know, they'll stop and squeeze your hand and talk about what has happened to them and their families.

And, you know, that kind of glimpse into what I think is a constant conversation, whether or not it breaks through the surface or whether we have all those cultural obstacles toward letting it break through doesn't, to me, suggest it's not going on.

Q What do you think the cultural obstacles are? What keeps it below the surface?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, it is viewed as somewhat out of the ordinary and therefore not a subject for daily conversation, because it is more important, in the short run, to get the lawn mowed and the kids off to school and to deal with the problem at work.

And we are all today actually leading faster-paced lives, filled with more activity, so that the time for thought and contemplation, even if one were disposed to doing that, has shrunk.

And if you go back and read the correspondence that existed in the 19th century between people of all different walks of life -- you know, it may not be some heavy theological inquiry, but, you know, there will be all kinds of flashes about what happened in a way that you know that, you know, the whole cycle of life and its meaning is tied into their daily life.

You know, by the nature of how we spend our time today, we have walled ourselves off from that. I mean, we get up in the morning and we go to work, and our children don't know what our work is, because they don't see us plowing a field or making a quilt. We go off and push papers and then come home and try to explain it.

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Our relatives age and die often in places far away from our homes, as opposed to what happened in earlier times.

So that we've compartmentalized so much of our lives that trying to find even the time to think about how it all fits together has become harder and harder.

Q We lead disintegrated lives rather than integrated lives?

MRS. CLINTON: I think much of the change that has occurred in the last century has given us tremendous opportunities for self-realization and changing roles and all of the good things that people like you and I take advantage of.

But I also think it has had a scattering effect. And we see that in so many ways, whether it's something as simple as mobility, which moves people away from their extended family; or fast food restaurants that remove the opportunity for sitting down and having dinner together; to specializations in all the professions, where people become more and more isolated into what they know, but they're no longer able to feel comfortable on a broader scale.

So in so many ways we have chopped ourselves up into little pieces, both personally and socially, which make it more difficult to think about a cohesive whole. And I think that's one of the reasons why there's such a call now for -- even in, like, health care reform.

I mean, I was up on the Hill today talking with several groups of Senators. And I probably heard from three different ones, across the political spectrum, about the need for a holistic approach. You know, people want to kind of get back to some sense of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts again.

Q (Inaudible.)

MRS. CLINTON: Well, you know, they're -- I mean, that that may be -- that may be something that, you know, is part of this and that some people are interested in. But I think it operates, what I'm describing, more on a kind of a

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daily basis, just this sense that time is getting away from us and there is too much pressure, there is too much stress, that we don't even have time to take a deep breath and spend it with our kids.

And, you know, people take pride in the fact that they never take vacations, that they never slow down. And we are running 24 hours live.

Q With all of the things that you're talking about, are -- they are disintegrated. They are all apart from each other. I guess what I'm looking for is, what is the unifying thing? What is the core thing that can bring all of that -- that can bring the kind of cohesion that you are looking for, that you're talking about?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't think there is one core thing. I think this has to be thought about on a variety of planes. I don't think there is, you know, one unifying theory. Although I still love your unified field metaphor, because I think that that kind of captures what we're trying to do. But it may be that there are many different fields.

Q But I'm not sure of what I meant when I said that. I mean, I don't know what --

MRS. CLINTON: You may not have been fully aware of everything you meant when you said it, just like when you tell somebody for the first time you love them, you're not fully aware of what that means. But it's the best effort you can get to kind of convey the full range of emotions and feelings and intentions and expectations that you can articulate at the time.

And I think that there are a number of challenges to integrating parts of our lives, integrating our communities, all of that, which have to be addressed at the same time. And some people are better addressing one than another.

To get back to the health care example, you know, trying to create a more integrated delivery service network in the healthcare system is not going to necessarily meet somebody's needs for spiritual meaning in their life.

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Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: But that, in and of itself, would serve a good purpose, that it would help bring people together to work more cooperatively, to help each other more than they might have otherwise, because we had a vision of what our health care system should look like.

And if you kind of take each piece -- like some of the urban problems we talked about for a little bit in our last conversation -- you know, moving on a number of fronts at the same time may require different approaches. But if it is all viewed as part of, you know, trying to treat people with more respect, hold them to be more responsible, create environments in which they can more likely flourish -- on and on down the line -- then maybe eventually we'll have more of an idea of what we mean by some kind of unified approach to this.

Q It does seem to me though that the thing -- that if there is something that binds all of the disparate things together into a unified approach, it is something about spirituality. And that is where, it seems to me, the difficulty is, because people are embarrassed to talk about spirituality today on some level.

And I know Michael Lerner, you know, has said that we have to get to change the dialogue so that people will talk in terms of very old-fashioned words like "love" and "caring" and "sharing," and you have to be willing to get up and use language like that, because it's the only language that can cut through all of this.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think he makes a really good point. But I think that the language has to be connected both to some personal commitment to be more willing to change yourself and how you treat other people. And I think you have to be committed in some sense of what kind of social change you think would help better bring about a condition in which talking about sharing and caring wouldn't be viewed as either hypocritical or naive.

And it is difficult to strike the right balance. You know, I thought one of the great phrases was "tough love," when that was in vogue. Even though for many it was

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an oxymoron, I thought that it conveyed the kind of sense of commitment to being both realistic and open, which is kind of what I hear you talking about.

I mean, how do we cross that boundary, which right now is there. I mean, people do get squeamish. And a lot of people who have tried to talk in those terms find themselves being shut out by a large audience and instead being marginalized, you know, because it seems like it's not rooted in the world. And that's an ongoing struggle. I mean, the values that underlie most great religions in this world have never been fully accepted. And the daily lives of most people are certainly in the decisions of nations.

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: But they serve as guidelines and spurs to what we should be thinking about if we are really going to create an atmosphere in which more people are more likely, over the long run, to get along better and help each other in all of the things that people claim they care about, even if they don't want to talk about it.

Q And am I right in thinking, then, it would be not in a dogmatic way, not in a religion A over religion B, but this acceptance of the idea that there is a spiritual element to this, a set of spiritual values that we all know we all basically agree on, that that is at the core -- that acceptance of that is the core thing that unifies all of this together? Is that --

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's getting closer, yes. And I think that how one then describes it and applies it is always difficult.

Q Well, you -- I can hear you searching for the language. I mean --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I'm nowhere near there. I mean --

Q Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: And I probably am not smart enough or wise enough -- or whatever enough -- to be able to do it.

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But I think there are people out there who share the same feelings. I know there are. And they are found in all kinds of places, some of them very unlikely.

And maybe as little as just kind of reminding ourselves to treat other people with a certain level of dignity and respect -- and I keep going back to that, because that's so basic.

I mean, if we could do anything in our society to deal with our real problems, after eliminating a lot of the stereotypes and the obstacles for people seeing one another as they are, as human beings, that would a tremendous step forward in so many ways.

And how we just break this whole enterprise down into small enough pieces -- somebody says to themselves, "Well, you know, I'm not going to tell that racist, sexist joke. I don't want to objectify another human being. You know, why do I want to do that? What do I get out of that kind of action? Maybe I should try to restrain myself."

Or somebody else says, "You know, I'm going to start thanking the woman who cleans the rest room in the building that I work in. I mean, maybe that sounds kind of stupid. But on the other hand, I want to start seeing her as a human being."

And then maybe the next step is I say to myself, "How much are we paying this woman who works a 3-to-11 shift and who is taking care of her kids while she is here working? And how do we make it possible for her to be able to both be a good parent and perform a necessary function?"

And, you know, you kind of -- I mean, these are little pieces. And a lot of those little pieces can be done a very small scale but which then aggregate, which I think is basically what we're really looking at, is, you know, millions and millions of changes in individual behavior that are motivated by the same impulses even if we're not doing a very good job of describing them.

Q Well, actually that was a pretty job. I mean, that sewed lot of things together. And you're talking about what Lerner calls "the politics of caring" and so on with that --

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I mean, it's the same -- that's what we are talking about here.

You know, you have to -- if you make a series of small efforts, I think you care about things that -- it adds up -- you hadn't thought of.

My colleague, Martha Sherrill (phonetic), took a stab at describing your philosophy this morning. And I would like to ask you if you would take a stab at it, in your own words, your defining your philosophy of life as it has been shaped by your readings, your experiences. Is that possible to do?

MRS. CLINTON: I don't know. I don't know whether -- I mean, I don't have any coherent explanation. I hope some day to be able to stop long enough actually to try to write down what I do mean, because it's important for me that I try to do that, because I have floated around the edges of this and talked about it for many, many years with a lot of people. But I've never regularly kept a journal or really tried to get myself organized enough to do it. But --

Q It's difficult.

MRS. CLINTON: It is difficult. And it is something that is important to see clearly. And I actually thought Martha made some pretty good points in trying to describe what I have been saying and trying to do.

You know, the very core of what I believe is this concept of individual worth, which I think flows from all of us being, you know, creatures of God, and being imbued with a spirit. And it's a wonderful gift that most of us struggle against and with all of our lives, whether we do so consciously or not.

And I used to -- you know, one of the things that I did when I was reading a lot of Methodist theology and writing and The Book of Discipline some years ago, is I gave a series of talks about kind of underlying principles of Methodism -- to Methodist groups, obviously. But I also talked a lot about how timeless a lot of scriptural lessons were, because they tied in with what we now know about human beings.

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I mean, if you break down, like, the Golden Rule, when you say -- which does appear in various forms, as we talked about before -- you say, "Do unto others." Or if you take Christ's Commandments and -- you know, "Love thy neighbor as thyself" -- I mean, there is an underlying assumption that you will value yourself, that you will be a responsible being who will live by certain behaviors that enable you to have self-respect, because then out of that self-respect comes the capacity for you to respect and care for other people.

And I always used to be struck by how brilliant, psychologically, that concept was -- you know, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." I mean, not "more than," not "because of." But it presupposes a whole web of actions and connections that creates people who have that fundamental sense of personal worth and responsibility who then can love themselves and other people.

And what -- you know, kind of what is at the root of a lot of what Michael Lerner and other people are struggling with is how do we create conditions in which we maximize the number of people who feel good about themselves to start with?

Q In which you reward the things you are talking about. I mean, you reward virtue. And you --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, you don't even have to reward it, because it becomes its own reward if you have enough positive support for people being responsible for each other.

One of the things that I have looked at a lot in the last couple of years, because of my work in education, is how even in the toughest school environments, when you start giving students responsibilities that they then can carry out -- whether it is taking care of a school building, whether it is tutoring younger children, whether it is being on kind of student court -- you know, even in kids who most of us would say have very tough lives and are often in trouble with law, you see the growth of responsibility. And you see a greater sense of self-worth about who they are.

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And once somebody feels more secure in themselves, they're less likely to be violent, they're less likely to break the law, they're more likely to want to work and to take care of a family, they're more likely to get into the rhythm of life that goes back the millennia as being -- for most people, you know -- more likely to produce a greater sense of well-being than some of the alternatives.

You know, there are always exceptions. There are geniuses and there are eccentrics, and they should be, you know, flourishing because they add kinds of things to the rest of us.

But what we now have, this kind of strange circumstance in our society -- where at the same time that we have growing problems with violence and antisocial behavior and all kinds of indications of distress in people's lives and in society -- we have a reluctance to figure out how best to talk about that, how to overcome our denial of the problems that led to a lot of those very severe conditions. And so we kind of are in this no man's land.

Q But we have a reluctance, I think, it seems to me, to say at the beginning of the talk -- a reluctance that is lessening all the time, but we've had for years a reluctance to say certain behavior is good and we encourage it, and certain behavior is bad and we discourage it --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes.

Q -- and which is not a radical concept in the history of humanity, but which we did somehow get away from.

MRS. CLINTON: And which we do in our own lives.

Q That's right.

MRS. CLINTON: I mean, we pass judgments all the time.

Q Every day.

MRS. CLINTON: I can remember sitting in a law school class years and years ago in which a hypothetical was being discussed about terrorists. And there was some -- I

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can't remember all the details, but there was some long, factual basis about these terrorists. And they were going in to set bombs and the like. And they claimed to be doing what they were doing for political purposes, but you could also argued that what they were doing was, you know, motivated by their own needs for whatever -- excitement, recognition, whatever it is.

And I remember sitting there, listening to the conversation, as so many people tried to explain away or rationalize their behavior.

And I remember saying, you know, "I mean, there is another alternative. And the other alternative is, is that they are evil." You know, there are evil people in the world.

Q Absolutely.

MRS. CLINTON: They may be able to come up with elaborate rationalizations to attempt to explain their evil, and they may even have some reasonable basis for saying that their conduct needs to be understood in light of preexisting conditions. But their behavior is evil.

And separating the individual and whatever that individual's particular personal history is from that individual's actions so that you can say what you are doing is wrong, and you can say it without embarrassment, would be a good first step.

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: You know, my father used to say all the time -- he'd say to me, "I will always love you, but I won't always like what you do."

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: And I used to -- you know, as a child, I would come up with 900 hypotheses, you know. And it would always end with something like, "Well, you mean, if I murdered somebody, and I was in jail, and you came to see me, you would still love me?"

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And he'd say, "Absolutely. I will always love you, but I would be deeply disappointed, and I would not like what you did, because it would have been wrong."

And, you know, that was so simplistic, but it was so helpful to me, because it gave me the basis of unconditional love that I think every child deserves to have. And one of our problems is that too many of our children don't have that.

Q That's right.

MRS. CLINTON: But it also gave me, from the very beginning, a set of values that he would exercise based on what I did. It wouldn't mean withdrawing his love for me as a human being, but it would mean, you know, disagreeing with and condemning, if necessary, what I had done.

And, you know, as I got older, I used to think about my father all the time when he said that, because I saw so many people who got confused about that and who felt they had to justify people's behaviors in order to stand up for the people, who often might have unmet needs or just causes.

And I remember being in court one time. I was representing an insurance company. And these two young boys had broken into a neighbor's house and committed thousands of dollars' worth of vandalism -- I mean, horrific vandalism. And they were, otherwise, these two, you know, seemingly normal-looking kids.

And I was representing the homeowners' insurance company that insured the neighbor's house. And so under the laws in effect, I was in court in the juvenile court when the family of the two boys were there. And I will never forget being so struck by the difference between my father's attitude and the attitude of the parents who were there.

I mean, the mother kept saying, "Well, this couldn't have happened. I'm a stay-at-home mother. I know where my children are all the time. This couldn't have happened."

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And the father kept saying, "They didn't do it. But if they did do it, there must have been a reason they did it."

And, of course, there was no doubt at all they had done it. They had been caught doing it.

Q Right. Right.

MRS. CLINTON: And instead of the parents saying, "We don't know why they did this, but what they did was wrong. And we're going to help deal with this, because we care enough about our children to hold them accountable to some standard."

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: And I sat there, looking at these two young boys, who I think were maybe -- I don't know -- 9 and 11, 10 and 12, something like that. And I thought, how confusing this must be.

I mean, your moral universe is shaped by your family. If they didn't know what they were doing was wrong, even if they were mad because -- you know, whatever reason, the neighbor didn't let their dog in the yard, or whatever it is. If they didn't know what they were doing was wrong, how impaired they are. If they knew what they were doing was wrong, but they are watching their parents rationalize and excuse it, how impaired it is.

But I thought -- I mean, I juxtaposed my father and his -- you know, my father was no great talker and not very articulate and wouldn't have known Niebuhr from Bonhoeffer from Havel from Jefferson, or any of that stuff, would have just thought, you know, a conversation like this was goofy, you know.

Q But he taught you --

MRS. CLINTON: But he -- you know, but he gave me the basic tools.

Q Right.

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MRS. CLINTON: And it wasn't fancy philosophical stuff, you know.

Q Right. But every father -- I mean, I think that's exactly right. That was what good fathers and mothers of generation after generation did, without even thinking about it.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q I mean, it wasn't something for debate.

MRS. CLINTON: That's right.

Q And a fair judge of history could say that that stopped, that simple mechanism by which society perpetuates good values stopped with the social experimentation of your generation, that that was the generation that said, "Okay, we -- all the old absolutes, we don't know what -- whether they work or not. It's all relative. We live in an existential world. Let's not be judgmental. And let it all hang out, and do your own thing." And is that unfair?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I don't know if it's unfair, but it's probably incomplete. I mean, I think a lot of these trends -- when you go back and read about, you know, the war to end all wars and the total breakdown in belief that happened after the end of World War I -- I mean, you can look -- you can see the roots of a lot of this in western societies anyway and with industrialization and all the things that broke down a lot of the ties that bound people into more traditional networks, which really served as the primary enforcer of both good and bad. I mean, don't forget we put people into stocks, and we've done a lot of things that have erred on both sides of this that you've got to be very careful about.

Q Absolutely.

MRS. CLINTON: But certainly given the extraordinary amount of questioning that went on in the 1960s, that there have been excesses and there have been, you know, wrong decisions made on the basis of that questioning, the questioning itself I think is healthy.

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And I always think that people should be encouraged to ask hard questions and should, you know, wonder about their relationships to authority or whatever. But, of course, it's easy for me to say that, because I always have done that from a position of structure.

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: I mean, I had the kind of structure in my family and my other institutions when I was growing up that gave me something against which to measure the questions I was asking and the answers I was getting.

So I do think that -- you know, that there is then a kind of fallout from that which we are beginning to try to deal with. And the trick is to figure out how to strike the balance, but that has always been the trick -- I mean, since the Greeks. I mean, you know, that is the trick, about how you strike the right balance between structure and flexibility, between the individual and the group.

And I don't remember who it is who writes about different kinds of parenting skills, but, you know, they talk about it breaking down into, you know, people who are very lenient and basically adopt a parenting style that permits children to kind of find their own level without any real guidance or direction; and then a model which is very authoritarian, which leaves very little room for experimentation and growth as a child moves through different phases of life; and then what is called authoritative, which tries to strike the balance -- I mean, you know, thinking through what is appropriate and what isn't appropriate. And I view that as a better model, whether we're talking about parenting or a lot of other difficult tasks.

I mean, how do you ask the hard questions, often not get any answers, let alone satisfactory answers, but pursue the line of inquiry in a way that enhances the outcomes you're trying to get?

But then, you know, there were dilemmas in the 1960s that were very difficult to figure out how they were going to be worked out without a more dramatic or more absolutist stand. I mean, the civil rights movement, you know, made demands on behalf of people that were justified

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demands and yet were not viewed as such by people on the other side.

And after a certain point, there has to come a decision in which you stand up for values that you think are more likely to be fulfilled by this line of action, after you try to sort of work out whatever it is that you can with people who are opposed to you.

And some of the individual freedom that flowered in the 1960s, you know, both was as a result of and even a precursor to some of the opportunities that minorities and women and other people now have.

Q That's true. I mean, there were things that you can't separate out very easily. I mean, the individual freedom that led to immense sexual promiscuity among the young is tied in some ways to the individual freedom that allows an entire generation of young women to go to work. I'm not quite sure how, but there is some --

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. So what we have to constantly be doing is saying, well, what is it we're trying to achieve? And what you're trying to achieve is enhancing individual self-worth, then you try to avoid the destructive outcomes. I mean, you know, you try to discourage people from using drugs; you try to prohibit it wherever it's possible, because you don't see good outcomes for the vast majority of human beings who would try that.

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: But in the sort of authoritative mode I'm talking about, where the parent would say, "Absolutely not. You know, that is wrong, and don't do it," there is a range of behavior, where the parent might say, "You know, I don't think that's a good idea, but you've got to learn your own lessons in life" -- and where you sit there and you watch your child make a mistake, but it's not a life-threatening, hopefully, disastrous mistake, and you know it was the right parental decision, because that's the only way your child is going to learn.

And we all, in a sense, at a certain point, become our own parents. So we have to adopt that same kind of

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approach. We say, "You know, I'm not sure this is a good idea, but it seems worth the risk, and it's important for me to try it, and so I'm going to do it."

Q Right. But one thing that parents do in that authoritative model and that society used to do in its more authoritative mode -- or pre (inaudible) mode or whatever -- was that they used to punish people. Parents do this automatically. Parents -- and certainly they don't view that it's wrong, only worse, because there is a threat of punishment, unspoken, attached to it. And that, it seems to me, is a great problem.

So what you were talking about -- (inaudible) we seem to have gotten away from the notion of punishment being an acceptable thing that you can even talk about. Everyone has the right to do anything they want, any sort of behavior. And no one is supposed to be making a value judgment. And so you can't do that.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I mean, there really -- it has gotten very complicated. You're absolutely right. I mean, on the one hand, we punish people constantly now. We're filling our prisons up.

Q We have the longest jail terms of (inaudible).

MRS. CLINTON: I mean, we are incarcerating more people per capita than any society has ever incarcerated.

Q Right. Fifteen years for a drug offense.

MRS. CLINTON: Yes. I mean, we -- and, you know, we're adding penalties that can have the penalty of death for all kinds of crimes. I mean, we are -- we've gone punishment crazy. But it's like punishment that is sort of disembodied from any larger purpose.

I mean, part of the reason effective punishment works when it works is that there is a direct cause and effect; and there are consequences that somebody has to suffer, and they see the effect of it. And they also are given the possibility that if you did this and you are punished for it, then you can go on and the going on has a certain inherent reward to it.

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I mean, we have set up a system right now in which we have loosened a lot of the informal authoritative intermediaries that kind of used to be out there and keep an eye on people and serve as consciences, if you will. And we've substituted this huge bureaucracy that processes millions of people, but it's impersonal. It doesn't have any connection with that.

I mean, I read the other day about something that I found very promising. There's a -- I don't know, some state is bringing victims in to talk with prisoners.

Q Yes, I read about that.

MRS. CLINTON: Now, you know, again, somebody might say that's say real touchy-feely, but on the other hand, we've depersonalized everything we do. The criminal has certainly depersonalized his victim, but then we depersonalize the criminal. We process him through, send him away for a few months, which is usually less than what they allegedly would get for the punishment, turn him back on the street, and, you know, the whole process starts over again. We've got to reconnect people, you know, with consequences.

Q It's funny you should say that, because I was thinking about this just the other night. The great weight that was always there, the great weight of punishment, it never was going to jail. It was that people wouldn't like you. It was all societal.

The thing that stops people from committing crimes, from being bad, for most people isn't "Well, if I do this, I'm going to get 5 to 10 over at Lorton." I mean, most people don't even think in those terms. You don't do it because your mom wouldn't want you to do it. And why wouldn't she want you to do it? Because everyone knows it's bad. Everyone knows you're not supposed to do it. I mean, that, I think, is the thing that you're talking about. That's what held things together.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, because there are always going to be people who violate the law.

Q Right.

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MRS. CLINTON: I mean, we're not going to create some nirvana, you know. I mean, there will be a certain percentage of people who whatever combinations of biochemical, physical, social, psychological, whatever -- name the factors -- are going to be evil, do things wrong, whatever. Okay?

But what we have created now is a system in which there are a lot of people who are inherently decent who are caught up in self-destructive and antisocial and violent behavior because they don't see any alternative, and there aren't any structures that help them make better decisions. So it's like the least -- it's the path of least resistance for a lot of people. It's the short-term gratification. You know, there isn't any countervailing weight.

And the countervailing weight could come from a variety of sources, all of which have failed. I mean, we haven't done a very -- I mean, the family, the media, the mass culture, the church, the job market -- I mean, you know, you can just list all of these all of these potential counterweights that could be there to say, "Hey, guys, I mean, you know, you've got a better future if you don't do this. This is not the right thing to do." That message is not coming from anybody.

Q No. And I think that you mentioned the media. I used to not think that was such a big deal, and I now think it is a bigger and bigger -- I mean, you go and you watch an old black-and-white movie from the fifties, you know, about a man and a woman in love, and the message is -- I know it's propaganda and so on, but it is an ennobling message. It's chaste and it's about love, not lust. It's about being good to each to other and so on. And you -- I mean, now you go see, you know, "Pretty Woman," a movie about a rich guy who falls in love with a prostitute for the weekend. I mean, that -- that has got to have some impact.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, I'm convinced it has. I mean, I believe in both substantive and profit. We do not even yet know what we've done to ourselves -- and particularly our children -- with mass media, but especially television.

And I know that there are all these, you know, studies that argue back and forth. And I think finally we're

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becoming willing to say, you know, if you've got a television set on in a house most of the day, and if you've got children watching it six or seven hours a day, and if poor children who do poorly in school watch it more than kids who have other activities, and if they see on average some huge number of violent encounters, and if they watch it for a long enough period of time so that its instantaneous and episodic way of communicating becomes part of how they see the world around them, then the combination of the actual watching of it and then the content of what is seen, we would be denying all reality to say it doesn't have an impact.

Q Right.

MRS. CLINTON: And certainly these people who pay for it would be foolishly spending their money if they didn't think they were influencing us, wouldn't they?

And so I think this idea that somehow there is -- that it is wrong to question what is on television because it's a commercial enterprise and it's a free market and it's the first amendment is another one of those arguments that we have denied having because, I guess, it will make us uncomfortable if we have it.

Q Well, the last person who tried to have it was Dan Quayle, and it did not work very well for him.

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that what he said was not wrong. It was that to single out anything -- that's why -- you know, what I said was that we have a variety of institutions, all of which need to take a hard look at themselves, including the government and its choices and policies.

To single out any particular institution and to say that that is the cause of a whole variety of social ills really is overstating the case and in a way helps to undercut the case, because you can't let anybody in this whole mix off the hook -- I mean, parents who let their kids watch television for those long hours, schools that don't have more interesting and challenging curriculum so that kids are more engaged, communities that don't have anywhere for kids to go after school. I mean, you go down the list.

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So that it is -- but it is certainly an issue that individuals are beginning to talk more about and exercise sort of more authoritative decision-making over. But I really think it needs to be on a broader scale, as do all of these. And I guess -- I know we've got to go.

Q Yes.

MRS. CLINTON: But that kinds of gets me back to where we started the other day. I mean, this conversation needs to be a very broad-based one, in which a lot of individuals, starting from where they are, ask themselves these questions.

I mean, you and I can talk about television, but we're not decision-makers in what goes on in television. And, you know, you need to ask yourself about what you do, in terms of, you know, journalism. And the TV people need to ask themselves.

And parents and political leaders and all the rest of us need to start on a scale that doesn't scare us away before we accomplish anything, because there is much we can do if we're willing to admit that the problem is enormous, that we have created, both deliberately and inadvertently, forces that are undermining a lot of the ties that held individuals together with one another.

And we are not getting uniformly good results from all of the changes that we have wrought. So we need to start saying, How do we do better? But we can't get scared away from it because it's an overwhelming task. I mean, there are lots of things that, on a case-by-case basis, could make a huge difference.

Q You talked, I know -- and I'll make this my last -- to Martha about having a burning desire to make the world a better place around you and doing that in concentric circles, which struck me. Can I ask you just, the last thing, to elaborate on that?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think anyone who is interested in these larger issues, as we are, has to be very careful that they never become a rationale for not dealing with one's own personal relationships or one's own personal

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sense of meaning. I've seen too many good people get wrapped up in a cause, a mission, and then sacrifice family, sacrifice their health, their sanity, you know, whatever.

And then I've seen others who are the most caring, committed people to those nearest to them, would really do whatever they could to help you in a time of need, but who seem indifferent or oblivious to the larger pain that people that beyond their circle of acquaintanceship are suffering.

And so trying, again, to strike that balance, I think you always have to always have to start from the center out. I mean, you have to be sure that what you're feeling and what you're saying and what you're doing are integrated, and they are integrated in accordance to whatever your particular personal values or spirituality might be, and that then they move out in concentric circles, so that, you know, you are most attentive to the needs closest to you, because, you know, they're the ones who are most reliant upon your caring and sharing. And those shouldn't just be words that one uses on a large social plane. They should be words that one uses and means very close to home.

But if we had increasing numbers of people who felt more comfortable personally and who felt more secure personally, and whose sharing and caring then could radiate outward, the impact of that would be remarkable. I mean, I -- you know, when you're in the presence of someone who radiates that sense of peace and commitment, it has a positive impact.

I mean, I met with some Catholic sisters the other day on some of this health care matter. And, you know, one of the sisters -- you know, just the way she talked -- I mean, there was a whole radiance about her.

And then, a couple of days later, I met with a woman who teaches in an inner-city school and thinks the kids that she teaches are the greatest gift that God ever gave her. And she has raised five of her own kids, and she has 30 of these other little kids. And just being around her, you knew that this was someone who didn't have to talk about meaning; she conveyed it.

Q Right.

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MRS. CLINTON: And so that's -- I mean, it's real basic stuff for me.

Q It is. Has it always been that -- have you always had that desire to -- I mean, I don't mean to be corny, but -- I don't think it's corny -- but to make the world a better place?

MRS. CLINTON: Yes, I always have. Yes. I have not always known what it meant, but I always have, especially since, you know, I was probably in junior high and high school and had a sense of what a lot of other people were up against and how lucky I had been. I mean, I really -- I was -- you know, I was a very lucky person in what I had been given.

And, you know, I just would -- I would just love to be able to be part of a society again where everybody felt safer and because of that increased safety, they could then reach out a little more and help each other a little more and not be scared off. And, you know, we'll always deal with every petty human emotion there is, but we can certainly minimize the social impact of that if we were to have some sense of our own contribution. So anyway --

Q Thank you very much.

MRS. CLINTON: Oh, thanks, Michael. Well, you made me think a lot.

Q It was much time in which to think, for me. I think that's --

MRS. CLINTON: Well, thanks.

Q I appreciate your --

(The interview was concluded.)

\* \* \* \* \*

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