

Name

Professor Martin

English 1301

18 February 2007

Women and Their Rights

The human race is made up of men and women whose relationship should reflect compassion, equality, mutual respect, justice, and cooperation. A derivative of the same species, yet separated by the one true difference, gender. It is this one difference, and its physical distinctions, that have compelled some to believe that men and women should not be viewed as being equal, as seen in Hillary Rodham Clinton's speech. Throughout most of history women generally have had fewer legal rights and career opportunities than men. Wifehood and motherhood were regarded as women's most significant professions. In most pre-industrial societies, for example, domestic chores were relegated to women, leaving "heavier" labor such as hunting and plowing to men. This ignored the fact that caring for children and doing such tasks as milking cows and washing clothes also required heavy, sustained labor. The tone of the speech gives off a feeling of disgust in the way that women are treated as if they are not as good as men, yet on the other hand there is a feeling of hope in that the world can still change. That one day women will be seen on the same level as men and given the same rights. As shown in Mrs. Clinton's speech, "women comprise more than half the world's population. Women are 70% of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those are not taught to read and write." The fact that women make up more than half of the world and are not educated is not only unacceptable, but an under utilization of potential within the human race. How is it that the basic rights and

freedoms can be given to some and taken away from others? It is not only unfair, but it is also lacking in logic.

Mrs. Clinton opens her speech by giving thanks, allowing the audience to understand just how important the topic involving women's rights is to her, and how much it means to her to be able to be a part of the United Nations Fourth World Conference of Women. She then goes on to discuss how it is a "coming together" no matter how different each person. If people of all sorts can come together for this conference, why can't the world come together and fix its problems? This conference is a coming together to find a common ground so that women and girls all over can gain the dignity and respect that they deserve. Mrs. Clinton states that the purpose of a conference, like the United Nations Fourth World Conference of Women, is to get people's attention and to force them to sit up and listen, and to fix the problems that face them. Not to just go on with their everyday lives continuing to keep sweeping their problems under the rug to deal with then another day. This conference gives voice to women everywhere who are too afraid to speak up, and "whose experiences go unnoticed, and whose words go unheard" (Clinton). Through her speech, Mrs. Clinton hopes to show that the world can be a place in which every woman is treated with respect, and dignity.

In saying, "However different we may be, there is far more that unites us than divides us," Mrs. Clinton is trying to convey a message that men and women need to put their petty differences aside and begin to respect one another. Not because of the work they do, or the lives they change, but simply due to the fact of a common human experience, that of simply being human. Man or woman, it doesn't matter, we need to start to see eye to eye. Mrs. Clinton then goes on to discuss how it wasn't until a women's conference ten years ago in Nairobi that domestic violence was dealt with, further proving how effective and efficient a conference like

the United Nations Conference of Women can be. Her discussion of past conferences and of her participation in a World Health Organization forum gives her creditability. It gives the audience a feeling of being able to trust in what she has to say. She says that she has worked with issues related to women in her own country, now she wants to work with issues related to women from around the world. Mrs. Clinton then goes on to speak about women she has met from all over the world from Indonesia, Denmark, South Africa, India, Belarus, Ukraine and Bangladesh. The fact that she cares enough to not only hear from American women, but in addition she travels the world to listen to what women from all areas of the world have to say gives her credibility and continues to show how high she holds this topic. She actually takes it a step further and wants to view first hand the issues that face women and their family's everyday. She discusses everything from family planning to health care with the women. Mrs. Clinton wants to understand how women live, and what kind of education, if any, women are receiving. Through her sharing her experiences with the audience, we are also able to see the bigger picture as to how big the problem really is, and that it does not just affect us here in American, but all around the world.

“Women are the primary caretakers for most of the world's children and elderly. Yet much of the work we do is not valued—not by economists, not by historians, not by culture, not by government leaders” (Clinton). Mrs. Clinton is trying to put into words how pitifully women are treated. They do the majority of the work and yet no credit is given. She says that, “at the very moment, as we sit here, women are the world are giving birth, raising children, cooking meals, washing cloths, cleaning house, planting crops, working on assembly lines, running companies, and running countries.” Women perform all the same job as men if not more, and for some reason are not viewed as being equal to men. Instead they have been denied the right to vote, the right to own property and even the right to attend school. By stating that, “tragically,

women are most often the ones whose human rights are violated” (Clinton), Mrs. Clinton evokes an emotion of sadness, showing the world that we need to wake up and examine the reality of the situation. Women may not be as strong as men, and therefore may not be able to perform certain physical jobs, but a woman should never, especially in today’s society, be denied a job specifically because she is a woman. She is trying to help people see that something is not right, that change has to occur in order for women to reach their full potential in society. “The history of women has been a history of silence. Even today, there are those who are trying to silence our words” (Clinton). This can no longer be allowed. Women have remained silent for way to long. The time has come when society must provide and women step up and demand the respect and credit that they have so long deserved.

Mrs. Clinton speaks about violations of human rights. She speaks about how slavery and prostitution are violations, how women are burned to death because their marriage dowries are too small, and how violence is one of the leading causes of death among women. Mrs. Clinton lectures on such violations because she hopes to show how society diminishes the woman and this results in violations that impact the human rights of women. How long will these horrible acts be aloud to continue until someone speaks up and says enough is enough. We can not continue to treat women as unequal or of lesser value. They are a valuable and presently an under appreciated and an under utilized portion of society. The time has come to change this division of treatment and to bring equality.

The definition of freedom is given to show that the word itself defines society’s concepts of equality. Freedom can only be defined by showing that it is a force that acts on people’s rights. Freedom also implies respect of views and differences. If society does not respect women, who are different from men, then women are not being afforded freedom. As shown in her

speech it was not until after the Declaration of Independence was signed that women gained the right to vote. She mentions this to demonstrate that even the US took long to truly grant independence, or freedom, to women. The change took struggle on the part of both men and women. Mrs. Clinton calls the struggle of women and men in a “divisive philosophical war” a “bloodless” war to contrast it with the colonists fight for their social freedom. If a fight is what needs to be done, then fight. Do not let time pass, take care of the issue now, while it is at hand. “We have avoided another world war. But we have not solved older, deeply-rooted problems that continue to diminish the potential of half the world’s population” (Clinton). How long is this going to go on for? Take action, and stop this nonsense before it is too late. If bold steps are taken now to change the way women are being treated, the lives of children and families will be forever changed.

All human beings are subject to some degree of social forces that limit freedom, but within those limits people are able to exercise greater or lesser degrees of control over their own lives. This insight applies equally to women, not just men. The world must eliminate the inequality of women so it can harvest the untapped, uneducated, underutilized potential of this portion of the world’s social personality. Until women have this equality, respect and dignity, women of the world lack freedom. Mrs. Clinton is continuing the “bloodless war” for the realization of “the hope for a strong and stable future.”

Works Cited

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