

Remarks on Receiving the Clinton Global Citizen Award in New York City
September 23, 2024

Thank you. I—this is what you call being trapped. *[Laughter]*

Mr. President, Hillary—Bill and—you've been—when you ran—please have a seat. I'm not going to be long—*[laughter]*—because I didn't think I was going to be talking about this.

You know, I've known the Clintons a long time. I think it's fair to say, Bill, I was one of the earliest supporters of your Presidency, because what I saw in you was not an incredible intellect, but a decency that you talked—you gave me credit for. It was always about the other guy, always about somebody else.

And you and I have something very much in common. We married way above our station. *[Laughter]* I'm Jill Biden's husband; he's Hillary Clinton's husband. *[Laughter]*

And you're a great friend, and CGI has actually transformed philanthropy.

Hillary, I want to thank you—and I maybe shouldn't do this publicly—but thank you personally for the way you have helped me, the way you've spoken up for me with such passion. I can't tell you—I—you can ask Jill. I—anyway, I love you. I love you.

We have something else in common. We have beautiful, very bright daughters—*[laughter]*—who ended up, to their detriment, listening to their fathers and mothers. *[Laughter]*

My daughter is in Philadelphia running—she got deeply involved in the Violence Against Women Act with me. She runs homeless shelters. She's providing housing for abused women in Philadelphia. That's what she spends all her time doing.

And I tell you what, you make us incredibly proud. You know, as a point of personal pride, I think Jill's work on women's health research—and this is Jill's idea. I mean, this was Jill's movement that was going to go down as one of the most significant programs in our administration.

So I want to thank you for—for being here. Especially Chelsea, thank you. Dr. Rice, thank you for your leadership. She's—*[inaudible]*.

And most important issue I can say is that, you know, I was—we were talking inside before—while we were watching this take place back in the—behind the curtain. My dad used to have an expression. He'd say: "Everybody—everybody—deserves a chance. Just a chance, no guarantee." I mean this—my—that was my dad. "Everybody deserves an even chance."

And the thing that I was pointing out—you know, the majority of women—of all the—all the commencements I've done since I've been Vice President and President of the United States, close to 70 percent of all the valedictorians have been women.

And so, folks, thank you for everything. Thank you for supporting CGI. Thank you for what you've been doing.

And I—you know, when—I remember when I was ill some years ago with a cranial aneurysm and I was being wheeled down into the operating room, and they had one of these observatories there, you know, where all the docs sit up and watch it go on. And I—before they started to put me under, I said, "Would all the Democrats please raise their hand?" *[Laughter]* Not many did.

And I asked the anesthesiologist on the way down, I said, "What are my chances?" "Oh, they're good. They're between, you know, 30 and 50 percent." And I said, "Good." [Laughter]

After it was all over, we were discussing whether it's congenital—that—that the—an aneurysm is congenital or environmental, and he just looked at me and he said, "I don't know." I tried to explain to him. I said, "Just do what you have to do." And he looked at me, and he said, "You know what your problem is, Senator?" I said, "No." He said, "You're a congenital optimist." [Laughter]

I am congenitally optimistic about this country. I really am. You're such—we're good people. We really are. We just have to live up to what we expect of others.

So thank you all very much. And I'll get out of your way.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:45 p.m. at the New York Hilton Midtown hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Chelsea Clinton, daughter of former President William J. Clinton and former First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton; and Valerie Montgomery Rice, president and chief executive officer, Morehouse School of Medicine. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 24.

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