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Auszug aus:

*Speech Analysis: Hillary Clinton - Remarks to the U.N. 4th
World Conference on Women Plenary Session (5 September
1995)*

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right to vote. It took 72 years of organized struggle, before that happened, on the part of many courageous women and men. It was one of America's most divisive philosophical wars. But it was a bloodless war. Suffrage was achieved without a shot being fired.

But we have also been reminded, in V-J Day observances last weekend, of the good that comes when men and women join together to combat the forces of tyranny and to build a better world. We have seen peace prevail in most places for a half century. 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.

Now it is the time to act on behalf of women everywhere. If we take bold steps to better the lives of women, we will be taking bold steps to better the lives of children and families too. Families rely on mothers and wives for emotional support and care. Families rely on women for labor in the home. And increasingly, everywhere, families rely on women for income needed to raise healthy children and care for other relatives.

As long as discrimination and inequities remain so commonplace everywhere in the world, as long as girls and women are valued less, fed less, fed last, overworked, underpaid, not schooled, subjected to violence in and outside their homes -- the potential of the human family to create a peaceful, prosperous world will not be realized.

Let -- Let this conference be our -- and the world's -- call to action. Let us heed that call so we can create a world in which every woman is treated with respect and dignity, every boy and girl is loved and cared for equally, and every family has the hope of a strong and stable future. That is the work before you. That is the work before all of us who have a vision of the world we want to see -- for our children and our grandchildren.

The time is now. We must move beyond rhetoric. We must move beyond recognition of problems to working together, to have the common efforts to build that common ground we hope to see.

God's blessing on you, your work, and all who will benefit from it.

Godspeed and thank you very much.

Quelle: <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/hillaryclintonbeijingspeech.htm>

Analysis of the speech

Clinton starts her speech with a short introduction, during which she first expresses her thanks for Gertrude Mongella for her accomplishments. Since September of 2004, Mongella is the first female president of the Panafrican Parliament in the African Union.²

After this, Clinton thanks the Secretary General for being invited to the conference and goes on to emphasise the importance of the conference by saying that it is “truly a celebration” (l. 4). Thus, in her view, the conference does not merely have a serious reason, but at the same time it shows that women’s accomplishments are being noticed, valued and appreciated.

As Clinton goes on in her introduction, she states that this conference is a meeting of women that is somewhat similar to the way that women meet everyday (l. 8). She gives a number of everyday-examples of situations in which women meet (“in fields and factories, ..., in living rooms and board rooms.” ll. 9/10). The important point this listing leads up to is that women almost always end up talking about family and children, which shows clearly that all women always have a common basis, and what is more: a “common future” (l. 14). Clinton concludes her introduction by making clear the important point of her speech, namely that it is important to strengthen women in order to strengthen families (“...we may help bring new dignity and respect to women and girls all over the world, and in so doing bring new strength and stability to families as well.” ll. 15/16).

In the first sentence of the main part of her speech, Clinton lists the most important issues in the fight for women’s equality, namely issues “that matter most in our lives” (l. 17), such as education and the job situation. This formulation makes clear that Clinton considers these issues as very basic, things that everyone has to deal with. In this way, Clinton makes her audience realise that the basic things she lists are not banal and go without saying, but that in fact many women lack “health care, jobs and credit” (l. 18) and that it is important to fight for these things. They are the basis from which women can “participate fully in the political life of our countries” (l. 20).

During the next part of her speech, Clinton makes use of repetition in order to emphasise a very important point. She acknowledges that “There are some who” (l. 21 and 22) have doubts about the significance of the conference. This is the first part of the repeated structure, the following sentence is started by the second part: “Let them listen...” (l. 21). By repeating this structure, Clinton focuses the attention of the audience on these important points and thus invalidates the arguments of the conference’s opponents in a way that no one can miss, especially not anyone who might have doubts. Also, Clinton captures the audience’s attention, because now everyone will be even more interested in hearing why Clinton considers the conference important: the sheer number of women who gather everywhere each day and who have now gathered for the conference is reason enough to fight for these women’s rights. Their mass lends strength to women (“It is conferences like this that compel governments and peoples everywhere to listen, look, and face the world’s most pressing problems.” ll. 26/27).

During the next short paragraph, Clinton names some of the gatherings that she has attended and will attend during the course of the conference (ll. 30-25). This might seem banal, but serves to show her deep interest in what can be done for women and also shows some of the specific topics that the participants of the conference deal with. This makes clear that the conference is not only talk, but also the participants implement plans.

After this short intermezzo, Clinton takes up again her earlier point that “if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish” (ll. 36/37). Again, she uses repetition (“if women...”)

² http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gertrude_Mongella (23.11.2008)

to lend emphasis to the argument that women need a certain important basis in order to build healthy and strong families. After asserting this point, she goes on to the consecutive point that strong families are needed to support strong nations: “and when families flourish, communities and nations do as well” (l. 39).

During the next two sections of her speech, Clinton names several examples of the work she has done in the past relation to women’s problems and women’s rights. These works are manifold and diverse, and thus again support Clinton’s argument that women’s problems need to be tackled on many different levels.

The circle of this argument is concluded when Clinton refers again to the purpose of this conference. In her view, the conference does not only have a purpose, but there is a “challenge” (l.56) in giving all women a voice. The rhetorical use of this strong term is to lend importance to the argument. Clinton underlines this importance by giving real statistics (“Women comprise more than half the world’s population, 70% of the world’s poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write.” ll. 57-59). The statistics lead from general to again showing how women have to suffer, and this climax serves to grip the audience and make them realise the pressure of women’s problems all over the world, in contrast to the “economists”, “historians” and “government leaders” (l. 61) who do not realise this.

The importance of giving thought to women’s lives is again underlined in the next paragraph of Clinton’s speech. Again, she makes use of the rhetorical device of first listing women’s everyday experiences to the problems they are faced with, thus focusing the audience’s attention on these. Also, the paragraph is built up using the parallel structure of starting each sentence with “They are” doing things (l. 65ff.). The choice of the present tense shows that women’s problems take place all the time and never take a break.

Clinton specifies her agenda more during the next paragraph: “As an American, I want to speak for those women in my own country...” (l. 71). By doing to, she makes clear that women do not only have problems in third-world countries, but that women’s problems are indeed universal. Clinton does not simply list women’s problems in the USA, though, but she starts several sentences by “I want to speak for those women...” (l. 71ff.) each of which she concludes by a very serious problem that women in the USA are faced with. In this way, she emphasises each problem individually, making clear that each problem needs to be dealt with and that there is no hierarchy among the problems. Clinton makes clear that she considers herself a spokeswoman for all the women in her nation who have serious problems (“I speak for them” l. 82). She takes them very seriously and by making herself a spokeswoman for them, she makes clear that she considers and deals with the problems personally, not just professionally.

Clinton stresses one central problem that women are faced with: “The truth is that most women around the world work both inside and outside the home, usually by necessity.” (ll. 83-85). This sentence contains two important devices. Clinton’s choice of the onset of the sentence makes clear that she now says something that most people cover up, namely the enormous workload of women. The “truth” she is about to reveal is not just this, though, but a second thing that she now reveals is that this workload does not come from choice. Clinton thus stresses the pressure that women have to deal with everywhere.

Her next paragraph starts out with a statement that might at first seem to be an amendment to her last revelation: “We need to understand that there is no one formula for how women should lead our lives” (l. 87). Thus Clinton makes clear that she is not advocating that women should not also work outside their homes. She does make clear two important things: first, she includes herself in the mass of women she talks about, again lending credibility to her arguments and making sure that the audience realises that she works on women’s rights on a personal level. Also, she stresses that women most importantly must be given a choice and a chance, and this can only be the case when their “human rights are respected and protected” (l. 91). Clinton drives home her point that women’s human rights are an absolute neces-

After this, Clinton comes to the concluding part of her speech. She calls upon the audience to “act on behalf of women everywhere” (l. 155). She continues the paragraph using the personal pronoun “we” (l. 155 ff.) when she talks about actions that need to be done, which makes clear that she considers herself to be a part of those who will actively fight for women’s rights. Again, this lends credibility to her claims, because by including herself, her claims are not abstract claims but personal.

Clinton closes the circle of her line of argument back to the goal of the conference, which is to support families, by stating that by improving the lives of women, families will benefit strongly as well. This is because “families rely on women” (l. 157) in a number of ways, and therefore there can be no strong families without strong women as a basis. To drive home her point, Clinton makes use of parallel structures again.

The speech is concluded by Clinton directly telling the audience what needs to be done: “That is the work before you. That is the work before all of us who have a vision of the world we want to see” (ll. 167/168). This time, Clinton first addresses the audience before she includes herself in her statement, because in this way her call upon the audience becomes even more direct, and each of the members of the audience will feel personally addressed.

Her final claim is that work needs to be done, that mere talking will not suffice. With this strong request on her audience, but also on herself, Clinton finishes her speech and thanks her audience by wishing them “Godspeed” (l. 173), a saying for wishing someone a lucky journey. Thus, even her final sentence includes the knowledge that the fight for women’s rights is long before finished, but a journey.



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