

**Chairman Albright's Remarks  
Madeleine K. Albright Luncheon  
Wednesday, May 9, 2018**

Thank you, Maureen, and good afternoon to you all. I am delighted to be here and happy to see so many familiar faces.

This is NDI's 35<sup>th</sup> year and nothing makes us prouder than the networks we have built – and one of the ways we do that is by inviting people to lunch.

So I want to thank Shari Bryan, James Van Der Klok, Ken Wollack and everyone else responsible for organizing this terrific event.

I also congratulate Sandra Pipera and her team for the fabulous job they are doing on behalf of NDI's "NotTheCost" Initiative. Sandra, we salute you and will follow you anywhere.

We also salute our distinguished visitors from overseas. Thank you all for joining us.

Your presence in Washington gives you a priceless chance to see – close up – how the American political system operates.

I only ask that, once you have figured it out, you will please explain it to me.

Now, I know that, this afternoon, I am expected to say wonderful things about women – but I worry that might not be appropriate – for three reasons.

First, I have been a woman all my adult life. This leaves me open to the charge of bias – to which I plead: "Guilty, as charged."

Second, I have just written a book about Fascism and, by an amazing coincidence, all the villains in it are men. So I don't want to pile on.

And finally, as Nazanin Boniadi and the participants in our spectacular pre-lunch panel made clear, women are *already* doing a great job of telling it like it is.

All a keynote speaker has to do is stay out of the way and let brilliant, gutsy women from around the world kick butt – although, of course, in an elegant and graceful manner.

It's good that we have so many activists on the front lines because our theme today, and that of our "Not the Cost" campaign, is how to halt violence against women in politics.

This goal could not be more vital or timely.

But I want to make one thing clear.

Decades ago, when I first started to speak out on this topic, it was customary to think of women as victims.

We were supplicants asking the strong for sympathy and help.

We were outsiders who had to be satisfied with tokens in the form of a single small seat at a very large table.

We were told to be patient and to settle for progress one step at a time.

And the only right we were really encouraged to exercise was the right to remain silent.

We were also expected to find comfort in the role of victim – to be objects of pity, without the responsibility to act.

But my message today – and NDI's message – and the message of the advocates, dreamers and doers in this room – is that women have finished with the role of victim.

Women today are leaders, legislators, diplomats, warriors, peacemakers, professionals, aviators, athletes, artists, educators, and a million other things, but we are not victims.

We have long since moved beyond the point when it might be said that "so and so does something pretty well *for a woman*."

The Era of Condescension has passed; the fact is that we have been doing very well for a very long time.

That's precisely what makes the haters so angry.

Because what really bothers the predators, the harassers, and the bigots is that they are afraid to compete with women on equal terms.

They are the true victims of fear, the real objects of pity, trapped in a web of their own insecurities. They are pathetic, but that does not mean they are harmless.

On the contrary.

We have learned through history that, when democratic movements of any type arise, they inspire and liberate, but they also generate opposition from those who have power and refuse to share it.

This opposition takes many forms, but violence is one.

In Honduras, early in 2016, the environmental activist Berta Caceres was gunned down because she threatened to derail a controversial dam project.

In June of the same year, British parliamentarian Jo Cox was shot and stabbed to death because of her support for the European Union and for legal immigration; the man who killed her called her a “traitor to white people.”

The following month, in Burundi, Hafsa Mossi, a member of the East African Legislative Assembly, was assassinated. We do not know why; we do not know by whom; but we do know that a courageous voice on behalf of peace was forever stilled.

Just seven weeks ago, city councilor Marielle Franco was murdered when assailants in Rio de Janeiro raked her car with bullets; Marielle had been a longtime critic of police brutality; the bullets were from a batch bought previously by the federal police.

These and other prominent crimes have attracted much attention, but the majority of violence towards women in politics takes place far from the public eye, behind closed doors, in the form of assaults and threats, and vicious comments whether direct or through social media.

Last year in Mexico City I met with an NDI grant recipient who was proud of their success in recruiting more female candidates, but worried about the harassment they were facing.

Some of this violence is physical, some psychological – but in either case, the bruising and the scars are real.

I was also in Ukraine last year and heard of women in political life being targeted by the online circulation of fake nude photographs. That’s but one case of many.

Have no doubt: a cyber bully has the same purpose as a conventional bully: to force women who are in the public arena to get out and to deter those who have not yet decided from getting in.

Often, these attempts to intimidate are grounded in political differences. But frequently they emanate from party colleagues, as well, from men who agree on ideology but don't like having to share the spotlight with women.

In the book I have just written on Fascism, I note that authoritarianism comes in a variety of shapes. There is no one model, but there are certain common characteristics.

And one is the need that all tyrants have to exercise control and bend others to their will.

To that end, they propagate the myth that those who oppose them are less than human, that they are not equal in dignity and worth because of what they think, or where they come from, or the language they speak, or the color of their skin, or their sexual orientation, or gender.

This propaganda is reinforced by words that dismiss and demean, by physical cruelty aimed at generating submission, and by policies designed to prop up the strong and hold the disadvantaged down.

Adolf Hitler's promise to women was "emancipation from emancipation." In the Third Reich, he said women would not have to worry about the burden of being free.

More recently, the President of the Philippines suggested that female rebels should be sexually assaulted or shot in the vagina; earlier, when he was mayor, he joked about a female missionary who had been gang raped, then murdered, saying "I should have been first in line."

In too many countries today – including Hungary, Venezuela, Turkey, and Egypt – authoritarian leaders have grabbed the pendulum of history and swung it into reverse.

Women are among the principal targets when civil society is repressed, journalists are thrown into jail, judicial systems lose their independence, and elections are drained of their meaning – because that is when the voices of change are drowned out, and the status quo, controlled by the fraternal order of despots, is reaffirmed.

Here in the United States, those of us who followed the 2016 presidential campaign do not have to dig very deeply into our memories to recall the sick signs, slogans, and sneers.

As for Russia, I wish someone would remind Vladimir Putin of his rightful place in history; after all, his first name isn't "Catherine" and his last name isn't "Great."

As I said, there are many models of tyranny, from outright Fascism to what some have labelled illiberal democracy.

But dictators of all stripes count on good people failing to act as they should, either because they are confused, or divided, or afraid. Fascists thrive amid silence.

Democracy, however, depends on people who have the courage to speak up, join together, and fight back against injustice.

It depends on people who refuse to be intimidated or to bury their ideals.

People who insist on truth.

That's why NDI launched its NotTheCost campaign, to ensure that women everywhere have a fair chance to participate in the political life of their countries.

With that purpose in mind, we are employing every tool at our disposal, from the use of focus groups, to the collection of more accurate data, to connections made through social media, to the design of election observer missions, to the drafting of model laws, to partnerships with regional bodies and the UN, to the mobilization of public opinion around the equator and from pole to pole.

We recognize that women have come a long way. But now is not the time to let up, it is the time to press even harder for lasting change.

We also recognize in all that we do that a woman alone, like a man alone, can be made to feel fear. But when women are united, no one can push us around.

Let us be clear: for women, violence is not a rightful or inevitable cost of participation in politics. Participation in politics is the way we will end violence against women.

So I leave you with one request – which I hope you will share with women and friends of women everywhere.

Whether you wear a ceremonial dress or a pants suit; a hijab or a sari; whether you are standing on a dirt floor or bumping up against a glass ceiling:

Help to make our voices heard –

In the voting booth.

In legislative bodies at all levels.

In multilateral organizations.

In the courts.

In the media.

In civil society.

In the workplace.

In class rooms.

And in the home.

Make our voices heard in a hundred different languages wherever questions of freedom and dignity and human rights are at issue.

And let the word go forth that, as women, we are not asking for our rights. We were born with our rights. We do not need anyone's permission to practice them.

If you attack one of us, you attack all of us; but if you stand with us, we can – and we will – make the world freer, more peaceful, and more just than it has ever been.

Thank you very much.

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