



In the Century of the Woman

THE WORLD IS NEWLY OPEN TO AN IDEA that we at Wellesley have long held dear: A world that is good for women is good for everyone.

I was cheered when the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize went to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee, and Tawakkol Karman for their leadership on behalf of women and peace. Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn in their 2009 book, *Half the Sky*, argue that women are the key to a nation's stability and growth. Our own Hillary Rodham Clinton '69 has said, "If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations do as well."

At a December event in London co-presented by Wellesley and the London School of Economics, I had the pleasure of meeting many of you—all incredible Wellesley women—who hailed from 13 countries. Madeleine Korbelt Albright '59 joined us as our special guest, and she shared her extraordinary insight on the increasing role women are playing in advancing democracy.

I had a chance to talk about the role that I believe Wellesley can and must play in what promises to be the most complex century humans have ever lived through. If indeed we believe that the advancement of women is the most effective and foresighted way to address global challenges—that women's agency may be the most important factor in the next 100 years—then this is a pivotal time for Wellesley.

Women now have the opportunity and *responsibility* to be equal partners in shaping our world and our future. In the last century, it has been Wellesley's task to prepare women for those roles and to endow them with the skills and sense of empowerment that make them effective leaders. In the 21st century, we will continue to focus on educating for leadership—and we must also sharpen that focus within a widening depth of field.

As was frequently remarked in London, this is a world none of us has ever known, a world our founder, Henry Durant, could never have imagined. One discussion, "Power, People, and Social Media," explored the impact of social media—its near-universal accessibility, its velocity, and its viral tendencies—on the way we share information, sway opinion, and even foment revolution.

To sustain our founding vision—that all of society benefits from the contributions of well-educated women—we must move forward to bring more "Wellesley" to this new world. We are busy building bridges—in large part, by creating new strategic partnerships in key cities around the globe, both with influential individuals and with organizations that have complementary strengths and values.

To this end, Wellesley is taking a leading role in the US State Department's first global effort to tap the power of women's liberal-arts colleges. On Dec. 15, 2011, the Women in Public Service Project, launched

by the State Department with Barnard, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Smith, and Wellesley, held its inaugural colloquium. The project aims to educate a new generation of global women leaders and envisions a world in which political and civic leadership is at least 50 percent female by 2050. Secretary Clinton delivered the keynote remarks and was joined in discussion by some of the world's leading women luminaries. Among them: IMF Director Christine Lagarde; Helen Clark, administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and New Zealand's former prime minister; and Atifete Jahjaga, the first female president of Kosovo.

This June, the project will convene at Wellesley with 50 emerging women leaders from around the world—especially countries in transition—for a first-of-its-kind institute offering intensive training and mentoring sessions. This institute is precisely the kind of extension of Wellesley's mission that we seek.

At my 2008 inauguration, I predicted that these next hundred years will be known as the Century of the Woman. This vision has come into even sharper focus. Aung San Suu Kyi, who spent years under house arrest for her role in Myanmar's democracy movement, has renewed hope that her nation can get on the "road to democracy," after speaking with

Secretary Clinton during an unprecedented visit. Seen all over world news are photos of the watchful eyes of women through veiled cover—images that represent nations on the brink of historic elections and vast change. Never before has the world demonstrated greater need and openness for what Wellesley can bring to the international arena. And never before have women—Wellesley women, in particular—been more ready to make a world-changing difference in our shared future.

H. Kim Bottomly



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—President H. Kim Bottomly