



# Big Strides, Diverse Paths: Women's Journeys to Political Leadership

## Part II: Panel Discussion

*March 5, 2009*

The influence of women has redefined the nature of politics, but how did they get there and what are the stories of their political journeys? On March 5th, 2009, **Eleanor Clift**, weekly panelist on *The McLaughlin Group* and author of *Madame President*, moderated a discussion featuring of women who have come from a variety of backgrounds, represent different levels of political activity, and have played leadership roles in politics.

### Part II: Panel Discussion

**Eleanor Clift**, Moderator; **Marsha Blackburn**, U.S. Congresswoman from Tennessee; **Jennette Bradley**, former Lieutenant Governor of Ohio; **Mazie Hirono**, U.S. Congresswoman from Hawaii; **Madeleine Kunin**, former Governor of Vermont; and **Grace Napolitano**, U.S. Congresswoman from California.

This program was presented in partnership with the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts Boston's McCormack Graduate School.

**ELEANOR CLIFT:** Good evening. Uh, glad to be here. Of course I meant, glad to be anywhere where I get to finish a sentence without getting interrupted, so--

[Laughter]

This is going to be great fun.

**WOMAN:** You hope, you hope.

**CLIFT:** I hope.



[Applause]

All right. The theme of tonight's forum is that women have made great strides in political leadership over the past decades. We still have a way to go, uh, to be--to achieve parity with men. But considering we couldn't even vote less than 100 years ago, I guess we've made some pretty good progress, and each of the women on the stage tonight has achieved some of the highest levels of elected office in this country, and the richness of their experiences and the diversity of their experiences, I think, will tell us something about the obstacles that are out there, but also the opportunities and the possibilities that are out there for women as well.

So I'm going to briefly just introduce each one of them and then we'll get right to the questions. On my far right is Grace Napolitano. She is a congresswoman from California. Her district spans East L.A. to Pomona. She's in her 11th year in the Congress and her last name is being plastered all over the pages of the newspapers these days because her sister, in spirit--Janet Napolitano is the Homeland Security chief. They're not really related, but they're sisters anyway. And second in is Marsha Blackburn, who has been in the Congress for 7 years and she represents a district in Tennessee that got some snow last week--unusual-- Memphis, and she likes to say that her district is a little bit of country and a little bit of rock-n-roll, because she represents both those capitals.

Um, in the center is Madeleine Kunin. She is the author of a new book called "Pearls, Politics and Power," which draws on her own\ experiences having risen in politics in Vermont to become the first woman government--government? Well, she probably was a one-woman government. First woman governor in that state and one of the first women governors, really, in the country.

[Applause]

**WOMAN:** Yay, Madeleine.

**CLIFT:** Then we have Mazie Hirono.

**MAZIE HIRONO:** Aloha.

[Laughter]

**CLIFT:** She's only in her second year in the Congress, but she told me in the green room that she's been in elective office for 25 years, and she was born in Ukashima--am I pronouncing it right?

**HIRONA:** Mm-hmm, yes.



**CLIFT:** Japan. And so, she's a naturalized citizen and to achieve what she has as a naturalized citizen, again, demonstrates the diversity and richness of America. On my immediate right is Jennette Bradley. She's the former Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, and among her other distinctions, she has--she carries the first honorary notion of being the first African-American Lieutenant Governor in the country, not just Ohio.

So I want to start with a question asking each of them to talk about that first moment when they either knew they wanted to run or somebody approached them about running. What was it that made them take the leap into politics, and why don't we start with Governor Kunin?

**MADELEINE KUNIN:** Well, it's why I wrote a book, to try to answer part of that question. But, you know, it works on a couple of levels. I didn't have an eureka moment. I think it was a culmination of many things. One of the things that-- I think a lot of women actually get started in politics because of a local issue or a family issue. Uh, and my issue was that my children had to cross the railroad tracks on their way to school, and I was a worried mother. Being a worried mother is a pretty good initiative for politics because it eases your worries if you take action. And so I had to figure out how to get a flashing light at that railroad crossing, and I figured it out. I'm not a lawyer, and one of the reasons for telling this story is because you can, in fact, figure out the system more easily than you think you can. I had to testify before a board, I had to collect signatures from my neighbors, and the upshot was I got that flashing light. And, um, I look back on that in a number of ways.

One, it may be the most tangible thing I ever accomplished, but two--

[Laughter]

**KUNIN:** Two is I got positive feedback. I learned that you can fight city hall, that if you make an effort and stick your neck out, something will happen. There were also issues when I first ran. One was the environmental movement and one was the women's movement. I first ran for the legislature in—was elected in 1972, so that's before many of you were born.

But those two issues really grabbed me. And then, like Mazie, I wasn't born in the United States, and I think the fact that I grew up with the American dream being told to me by my single parent mother, we didn't think of it that way in those days, that anything is possible in America, I think that gave me a kind of optimism about this country and about my own possibilities. So my mother gave me a great gift. I think you need--one, to be angry about something, which I was, or worried. Two, you have to have an imagination to see something differently than it now is, and third, you have to be an optimist, to believe that it's worth it, that you're not just banging your head against the wall in futility.



So, those are some of the ingredients that lead to my stepping over the line from a private person where you think you're safe--but you're not necessarily so--to being a public person, where you are, of course, more vulnerable.

**CLIFT:** Mm-hmm. Mazie, why don't you follow up, again, on your experience of having come to this country and then entering politics here.

**MAZIE HIRONA:** I came to this country when I was almost 8 years old, and I have the role model of a very courageous mother and I come from a country where women were basically chattel, and I was born right after World War II--I know, you can say I look younger than I am--anyhow--thank you--so, I have an image of my mother who left a very bad marriage and, you know, she showed me that one person can change a life, and my mother changed my life by bringing me to this country, which afforded me the opportunity for an education that I never would've had, had we stayed in Japan.

I was, um, born in a very small town in Japan. I never would've had a chance to go to college or anything like that. She changed my life. So, that was my image growing up and to have a very courageous, risk-taking mother. I turned to politics as a way to give back to my country, because I think as an immigrant, so many of us have that sense of having come to another country where there are opportunities that did not exist where we were born. And so I turned to politics when I was going to college, during the Vietnam War. I became politicized, but I certainly never thought of myself as running for office. I, um--it's not something that I thought, well, one day I'm going to run for office, but what I did—what happened was that I sort of eased into it.

As a lot of women, when we first think about running for office, usually other people come to us and encourage us. It's not like the guys who, you know--they think that they're really smart and they have all this stuff to offer from the word go--they never let, as I said to somebody, incompetence stop them. But it took me a while--I was involved in politics for a decade before I ever thought of myself as a candidate, and it was somebody else who came to suggest that I run and I've never looked back since, but--you know, the thing about politics is, I think, the one thing I've learned is that most of us are very content to— to behave in a very narrow, comfortable way of behaving. But through politics, I found that each of us has a capacity to be this way, to force yourself to be much more outward, and that's what politics gave to me and it is a privilege to be able to be in an arena where I can make a difference.

**CLIFT:** We have 2 mothers, then so far who are influential in your lives.

**HIRONA:** Yes.

**CLIFT:** Marsha, why don't you pick up next. I--what little I know about you--I know you didn't come from A silver spoon background, and that you have created opportunities



along the way and I think you also have a new book out, advising, which is really an inspirational, uh, book. But tell us--tell us how you--

**MARSHA BLACKBURN:** Yeah, I would be happy to, because I think it's important that we realize it takes passion for something to move forward in the political arena, and the governor talked about that you put that to work to solve an issue, and that is one of the things that led me into the political arena was being passionate about leaving my community in better shape than I had found it. I've always described myself just as a wife, mother, businesswoman, and a community volunteer.

I never thought that I would be the one that was the candidate that put my name on the line and ran for office, but I did. I served in the State Senate in Tennessee. Prior to that I was in a governor's cabinet and then in '02, came to Congress. And I think there are a couple of things for us to realize. I had the good fortune of being encouraged by a wonderful mother, wonderful grandmother, and a dad who was not afraid to take me to work with him and let me see and realize that there were great opportunities out there that existed for me beyond my little world where I had grown up. I would encourage all of you at this stage, as you look at moving forward, to take a leadership position in a company or in an organization, or maybe to be a candidate. Remember this--leadership is not as it appears but as it performs, and right now, in our nation and in our communities, people want individuals that are going to solve problems, that are not afraid of taking action, who are not risk averse to action.

So I would encourage you to remember that, that it's not as it appears but as it performs. And a quick little story for that. When I was in the State Senate and was running for Congress, I had led a battle in the state of Tennessee--where I'm from--to fight the implementation of a state income tax. See, we're one of 8 states in this country that do not have a state income tax. And the governor, who was from my party, had proposed a state income tax and I led the opposition and fought that and defeated that implementation of a state income tax. So I'm out knocking on doors one day, and it is hot in Memphis, Tennessee. It's about 103 degrees, and there I am in my tennis shoes with my push cards, and I knock on this door. This guy comes to the door and I hand him my card and I say, "Hi, I'm State Senator Marsha Blackburn, and I'm running for Congress and I have come to ask for your vote. Can you give me a couple of minutes?" And he looked at me and he said, "You stand right there." and so, I thought, ok. And he walked back in the house, and this was an elderly gentleman. Turned out he was in his 90's and I heard him yell to his wife, who was also in her 90's--he said, "Mama, get on out here! That little gal that's been leadin' that income tax fight is on the front porch and she is a little ol' bitty thing." And, um, I thought, you know, isn't that so true about how things happen, especially in this day and age.

Leadership is not as appears, but as it performs, and each and every one of you have the ability to exercise some form of leadership, and I would encourage you to, because you



might be like me and you just might perform beyond expectations that people have for you.

**CLIFT:** Yes, and one of the dirty little secrets of television is how--no matter how petit you are, you get to fill the screen.

**BLACKBURN:** That's right. Ha ha ha.

**CLIFT:** Congresswoman Napolitano, when did you have your eureka moment about wanting to go into politics? Was it thrust upon you, or how, how did it happen?

**GRACE NAPOLITANO:** There was no eureka point. There was a buildup, very much like some of my colleagues have explained. I have 5 children, 14 grandchildren and a great-grandson. I was working with my husband to help sustain a family and I was asked to run for City Council, and they said, "Oh, you'll never make it. You're a Mexican. You're a woman and, besides that, you're a Democrat, so you have 3 strikes against you." Well, 28 votes later I was the first female to be elected to City Council, and boy, did they—I defeated an incumbent and then I went on to the State Assembly for-- defeated 6 gentlemen, thank you very much, and served out--I was one of the original term babies, and then came to Congress.

My predecessor had already deemed his son-in-law and chief of staff as his successor, and I says, "Not on your life." And I beat him by 619 votes. Now understand that I am a transplanted Texan, born and raised in Texas. My mother and my father divorced when I was 3 and a half. Went to work at the age of 12. I'm 72. I've worked my whole life. Mine has been an experience in learning from that, so there's a lot of young people—I have a high school education.

How did I get into it?

People coming to me and saying, "This is wrong. We need to make a change. How do we do it?" Well, I started on a sister city commission in my local city where I, uh, reside still. Um, served about 16 years on that and then they said, "Well, you know how to address council. Why don't you run?" Well, I ran against an incumbent. "How dare you, Mexican woman, you!"

And eventually, things started changing. I ran for State Assembly. At the time they didn't want me to quit City Council because I'd managed to produce what the citizens wanted, and that was an open door policy. You run as a public servant, not a politician, and you live up to your pledges. Not a promise, but a pledge to do your very best. I went on to State Assembly, termed out and went on to Congress--this is my 11th year in Congress.



So like my friend Mazie, I've been around a few years. What that has taught me is that young people are able, with enough up here, this. But more than that, the heart. And that is to have change because one vote can make a difference. So that was my-- my turning point wasn't that I expected to run. Um, not having any formal college education other than classes for 16 years, taking a class here and there, I-- have you ever done or tried to talk to people, and your palms sweat and you stutter and you invert sentences?

That was me. But I went out and said, "Ok. I have 5 children that I have to be the role model to and I am going to succeed." So I went to college, took speech classes, at night, after working a full day and going home and cooking for the family and then going on to night school. The sacrifices--you don't deem them as sacrifices. This is part of your life. This is what you do, because it's there. You don't complain. Somebody else says, "Well, you must've been born in poverty." I didn't know I was poor. You live the life that you're given, and then what is it?

You say you get lemons, you make lemonade. Life has been great to me and I've met a lot of great people. How do I maintain? It's by using common sense, and by being able to understand that my role in Congress is to represent the district that sent me there. I am their voice, especially for those that have none. And we always take things for granted, because we feel, "Oh, look at the color of your skin, you don't know anything." Well, I was chair of International Trade in California, much to the chagrin of a lot of people--walk in and say, "Whose secretary are you?" So you know, there's a lot of perceptions still in the male-dominated fields that women should be back there--"Wait until I call on you, and then take your rightful place."

Well, guess what? There's a lot of youngsters--you out there-- who have the ability to be able to come in and take our place, but you've got to understand that it takes sacrifice. It takes the ability to--ahem, pardon me-- come in full force, 1,000%, and believe as these women have done, is that you can make a difference.

**CLIFT:** Have any of your children followed you into politics?

**NAPOLITANO:** They hate it.

[Laughter]

**CLIFT:** Because it took you away or because...

**NAPOLITANO:** They have learned to accept it, because that's been my choice, and they support me 1,000%, as does my husband. The problem is I don't get to see my great-grandson play, or my daughter's recital or my granddaughter's playing ball. You miss out. So it is a sacrifice, make no mistake about it. While it's a sacrifice of time, it's a sacrifice of your personal life. So if you are thinking of going into politics, either you go in full force or



don't even attempt it. And by the way, you have to develop a thick skin because they'll come after you with everything, including the kitchen sink.

**WOMAN:** That's true.

**CLIFT:** Former Lieutenant Governor Jeannette Bradley. Ohio is a place where they take their politics pretty seriously.

**JEANNETTE BRADLEY:** Very seriously.

**CLIFT:** It's pretty male dominated, as I recall. Tell us how you made your way.

**BRADLEY:** Well, it started, um--I have to say that, like many women in politics—someone asked me to run. I had been around politicians. I had worked with our Congressional delegation and had been very active in my community, following in the footsteps of my parents, and, um, I was really surprised when a group of individuals said, "Why don't you run for City Council?" The first time they asked me, I said, "No," and didn't think any more about it. But a year later, I really thought about it and it was going to be a watershed moment. It was an opportunity for the first African-American women to be elected to Columbus City Council.

In Columbus, Ohio, that was my first race, we served citywide, so we don't have districts. And I didn't realize that there hadn't been an African-American woman, even though I had grown up in the city because we had had males and running for mayor, but no women. So it was a unique time because the other woman running was a friend of mine. We served on the YWCA board together, so we said we would run but we would not be the type of campaign that we both hated, you know, the--

**CLIFT:** So you were running against each other, but you were going to do it nicely?

**BRADLEY:** Yes, yes.

**CLIFT:** Ok. [Laughter]

**BRADLEY:** But, it was--it was an open--it was a top 4. It was one of those--the top 4, so we could win, and that was the approach, that you could vote for both of us, and I'm happy to say that we both won.

**CLIFT:** Ok.

**BRADLEY:** And I unseated an incumbent and it started a new eye-opening experience. I accepted the offer to run after a lot of arm twisting and I was sharing with Marsha that I received a call from Congressman Chalmers Wiley--the late Congressman Chalmers



Wiley—my Congressman, and he said, "We need you." And I thought, is this the congressman on the line? Asking me to run for office? So after that, it was a pretty, you know, heady experience, but then I stepped back and said what--what are you thinking about doing?

This is politics, what are you--are you crazy? But it was the ultimate public service, and truthfully, that is how I entered into this as being the ultimate public service of serving on City Council and having the opportunity to represent the people and to make my city better. So I started out--and this for anyone who considers--I started out--I started with the determination to win, and knocking on the doors, especially the fundraising doors, And people looked me in the eye and said, "Jeannette, I think you're highly qualified but I don't think you can win."

**CLIFT:** Right.

**BRADLEY:** No check.

**BRADLEY:** I thought why can't I win? Because there was the perception-- one, I was--it was a first-time candidate, running against an incumbent, and the unspoken, I was an African-American woman. They didn't say it, but that was there, and it hadn't been done before. So--actually, it made me angry, and the angrier I got, the more I worked to prove them wrong. So I had that extra--and I think a lot of us who are of minority background or ethnic, that becomes a barrier that we have to overcome. People have the, uh, the ability but there's still some of those stereotypes that are there and I didn't know at the time, was it the fact that I was a woman or an African-American that was causing my little extra hurdle.

But when I would go out and campaign, the women in the audience always would come up and say something that was so motivating and so inspiring, to say, "I am so glad to see you running." That was the motivation that I needed. There were so many women out there who wanted me to succeed. So those naysayers didn't get me down. After, you know, we won, the 2 of us won the seats, I went on to serve, um, 3 terms. So I served for 11 years on Columbus City Council and I was very proud. It was my own vindication. My last run for City Council, I was the top vote getter in the city. So--ha ha ha--I think that sealed it, and then I later went on to become Lieutenant Governor and then State Treasurer of Ohio.

So I took a different approach--we were talking about the male--it wasn't a quest for power, it was really public service. Driven to do the things that I felt I would have the power to do in that elected position that would give me an opportunity, more than any other board that I served on, any other committee, and that was my driving factor for those 11 years, and I--and being on City Council was a lot different than being at the state level. You know, this is where people recognize you at the McDonald's restaurant.



And they know your home number. I used to get notes in my, uh, doorway. But it was the best training ground. I think of constituent service, and that has stayed with me all the way through of constituents, because it's very easy to be removed, but I think the training ground of being responsible to the local citizens carried me greatly through my political career and I still have that need to work in community service.

**CLIFT:** So anger, or, more politely put, passion helps.

**BRADLEY:** Yes. Determination.

**CLIFT:** Encouragement of, uh, family—especially maybe a mother.

**BRADLEY:** Yes.

**CLIFT:** Do the rest of you draw a bright line between public service and politics, or is it all the same? Please feel free to jump in.

**KUNIN:** I don't think you should. I think we should, uh, face the word politics. It's not a dirty word. Uh, it depends how you interpret it. And I think we should also face the word power. I don't think there's anything wrong with power. It depends how you use it. My very comfortable definition of power--

**CLIFT:** Mm-hmm.

**KUNIN:** Is the power to empower others, and really in public life, that is what you can do. And also I'd just like to make a comment about how many of you were asked to run. I find that kind of interesting. They do--studies show, and I'm sure you know this from UMASS, that women, more than men, need to be asked to run.

>> That's true.

**KUNIN:** And sometimes women aren't in the circles, where, you know, the formerly smoke-filled rooms that now have no smoking signs on them. We're not always in those rooms, though those rooms are changing. But if I would give you any advice, don't wait to be asked. You can ask yourself, or ask another woman. I mean, in the beginning, you mentioned the deplorable statistics for the United States of America, in terms of the percentage of women we have in elected office. Compared to Iraq and Afghanistan, uh, they have quotas. Iraq, I don't know if this provincial election ended up with 25% women, but about 25% ran--

**BLACKBURN:** That's right.



**KUNIN:** And Afghanistan is 27%, and we have 17%. So we've gotta find a way to get more young women to run for office. In addition don't wait to be asked, don't think you're not qualified, because Kathleen Sibelius, who is now, uh, nominated for HHS--I also, I interviewed about 100 other women for this book--told me, "Any woman who has organized a birthday party for a 5-year old..."

[Laughter]

"Can run a campaign." And there's something to that. All the work that many of you have done in your communities, and I'm sure all of us had community experience before we ran for office. You know, the PTA, raising funds for organizations, those are all the skills you need in politics. There's not one single route. I was talking to some students earlier from the University of Kansas, and, um, of them 2 were majoring in political science, 1 was in history. He liked it--he cheered when I said, "I majored in history." Well, you can major in history, you can major in economics, you can major in English literature. I got a master's degree in English literature. You have to know how to speak, you should know how to write and you should know how to read.

[Laughter]

And listen. Most of your information is verbal, uh, contemporary. And now that you've got Google, you really don't need to do much at all.

[Laughter]

But it's exciting, and, um, I'd love to know why more young women don't enter. And I don't want to monopolize this. Part of it is incumbency. People stay there a long time and not many positions open up for anybody who's outside the system, whether it's African-Americans or people of middle income or women, uh, but...it's--the other point I would just like to make, and then I'll stop, is you don't have to do this all your life. I'd like to think of politics as a form of public service, just as the women here said. Give it 10 years. It doesn't have to be a lifetime. It is a hard life. You know, as you just said, um, but you can do it in stages. You know, you can serve on your City Council. It's not the same thing as being a member of Congress and having to commute and all that, so there are many different levels and we need people at all these levels.

**HIRONA:** I think one of the ways that women can be encouraged to run is by organizations such as Emily's List. I remember when I was first, uh--I also was a Lieutenant Governor of Hawaii, and I went to see Emily's List in Washington, D.C., and I said, you know, they had a policy to only support Congressional, uh, women who are running for Congress or Governor, nothing below that, and I said, "Women don't spring up from nowhere to start running for governor. You really should start supporting women who are in the pipeline."



They do that now, but at that time, they didn't. So, organizations such as Emily's List really bring not only wherewithal, advice, but money. Let's face it. This is something that women have to get real about. It takes money to run for office. So, in knowing this, in Hawaii, I am one of the co-founders of a political action committee that is patterned after Emily's List. We raise money for--to support progressive--in our case, Democratic--pro-choice women, running for state offices. And there are only about 14 states, if even that, who have this kind of statewide political action committee.

And people ask me, "Why?" and I say, "Because it's damn hard to raise money." But you have to do it, and I am completely convinced that women have to learn to open up their checkbooks and write out the same kind of checks that they write to buy shoes--or buy-- I'm not kidding.

[Applause]

**HIRONA:** So that's part of the realities that we have to do. To help women run for office.

**CLIFT:** Has the internet made raising money any easier at the levels that you are at? I mean, the way it has for presidential candidates, it seems.

**HIRONA:** I'm working on it.

**CLIFT:** You're working on it, ok.

**NAPOLITANO:** One of the areas, dovetailing with Madeleine's, uh--dovetailing into that area, is when I speak to some of the young women, and it could be mothers, it could be students, is, especially if they're thinking of politics, is, especially if you are a parent or have been a housewife or have children, you take the idea of what you do--you're a mother, you're a cook, you're a driver, you're a doctor--I mean all of these things that you have, and you transfer the ability to juggle--you know, juggle? 10 times, 15 things at one time, and just put them into politics. Same thing. You're juggling schedules, you're juggling meetings, you're juggling talking to people, and to me, you know, I had to go to take, uh, class at college because, like I said, I would stutter. I could not really--I was afraid, I was timid, I was an introvert, if you will.

Well, all those things, all the people, you know, they can learn. If I can learn it, anybody can learn it. But we're afraid to get into it because we don't know what we're getting into. But in my background, uh, I was fortunate enough to start buying my house when we moved to California back in the sixties and I ran for the first time, borrowed \$35,000 on my home, to run for office which shouldn't have cost more than \$5,000-\$6,000. I forgave most of the loan because I hate fundraising. Women sometimes will not give to women. Women look at you, and men could look at you and say, "You're running for what?" And then when I ran for the State Assembly, I loaned myself another--I took a second on my home, and



borrowed \$100,000 to run for the State Assembly. Well, when I ran for Congress I had already put in 22 years with Ford Motor, I took my Ford stock, sold it--of course, I was penalized 30% because I wasn't 59 ½ at the time.

Well, guess what? I put my mouth--my money where my mouth was. I mean, if you say you believe you can do it, then you'd better prove you can do it. Well, I was in a position where I was able to do it. Imagine going before Labor, or before Emily's List, or before anybody and say, "I want to run for office, but I don't have the money." They show you the door. So you need to be able to say up front, "Here's what I have. Do you think I'm viable? I know I am. Can I do it? I know I can do it."

And that's something that sometimes it takes a lot of being able to understand who you are, understand your capabilities and understand that you have the power to be able to do what you say you do. And being raised in a single-parent family, uh, there wasn't that role model for me. I had to learn the hard way. Yes, I read a lot, but I was raising 5 kids, being a mother, working full-time, going to school at night, doing all the things that most of us--hmm, do you think you can do it? You can.

But it's interesting of how many people really don't feel that they are capable of being able to run for office because they don't qualify, whether it's age--I got into politics in my 40's, and I've mentored a lot of women who have said, because they saw me at that age running for office, they felt, she can do it, I can. So you are the role models and you have to learn to take your place because behind us, you have to come in. You have to be prepared to take on the establishment. Hopefully, by that time, the good 'ol boy system--gentlemen, I'm sorry, but that's the truth--it is, uh--ok, ladies, uh, wait until we're done and then we'll let you speak. That time will be gone when my great-grandson won't have to battle that, if he is going to be able to get into politics--I hope he doesn't, but anyway. Uh, but you understand, that's something that is not necessarily the norm, but it can be done.

It has been done, and it will continue to be done because this country in the beginning was founded, by whom? Citizen representatives. And we've forgotten that. It is politicians that are running our country, instead of people who feel that the voices of those that have no voice need to be heard. Not the ones who are contributing money, not the ones who are out there--hmm--pontificating, I call it, about issues which as a small minority, over the ones who the rest cannot get to get their voice heard. And we forget that this country was based on that premise. So it's harder. Now you have to have a lot of money to be able to run. Well, I was lucky that I was able to put money up front, but had I not been able to, I would not be here.

**KUNIN:** Let me just make a pitch for public financing at this point.

**CLIFT:** All right. Ok. Right.



**KUNIN:** I think that is, you know--it's an old democracy issue, it's not just a women's issue, but I never used my own money, just to show a difference. I mean, 'cause a lot of people think you have to be rich or you have to put up money, but what I had to get used to is asking people for money. And I think that's still hard. It's easier to ask for the Cancer Fund or the United Way or even somebody else running for office than yourself. But if you want to win, and once you toss your hat in, believe me, you want to win.

**ALL:** That's right.

**KUNIN:** You get over it. You just become a person you didn't think you were. Of course, you--you've got to say no to some donations that have strings, or potentially strings attached, but I do think that we really need to change the system. I mean, here we know in Washington. I mean, and our president is trying to change the system, but until we get to some form of public financing of campaigns, there's still going to be--first of all, it keeps good people from running, and second of all, it does--I guess the word is not too strong--it does corrupt the system, not in terms of quid pro quos, but--those are not usually obvious--but in terms of who has access and how legislation finally turns out.

**CLIFT:** Right. Yes?

**BRADLEY:** First of all, I'd like to say there are forums like this, there are more resources available to women considering running for office, than it was when I first ran 15 years ago--17, 18 whatever--anyway, I served for 15 years in elected office. But what I found very helpful and something that I continue to do is to mentor other women because it's very helpful to sit down with another female candidate or office holder and say, "How do you get over the butterflies to go in and ask for money?" But, more importantly, I think that now in 2009, any person, any woman running for office, has to recognize it doesn't matter whether you're running for township trustee or Alderman or Congressional Representative, this is a, almost a business, and you need to take a business-like approach about it and you need to train. You need--there are so many resources, it's not just learning how to r--um—to raise money, but you need to learn how to put your campaign team together. You need to learn how to get your issues statements together. You need to learn how to perform in public, to address constituent services. There are schools that are non-partisan and then there are some that are partisan, that you can go to and you can learn these things.

You know, I had the opportunity to speak at the White House Project, and it was an all-day training session for women interested, and it had breakout sections about communication--how to put together a campaign plan. And I also like to say for women in leadership--and we were talking about public service--I also like to emphasize non-elected positions. Because for women to be selected on the partisan system, we need to have women on the screening committees...and, you know, to help push that woman through to be on the



ticket. So you also need to learn how it works in your neighborhood, because politics in Ohio may be a little different than politics in Hawaii.

**HIRONA:** That's right.

**BRADLEY:** So you need to know what works in your neighborhood, and how you want to get through that system. The--what I tell most women is to get over their fear of failure. So what if you lose? You know, you can run again and win. You know, just get over that. But go in with it being very serious, with a plan. What you don't know, make the commitment to learn. You can learn. And I really enjoy now that I have mentor status, as a former--ha ha ha--but I still enjoy talking to women about some of the things they need to consider about running. And being very truthful with them. They were talking about the sacrifice. But there are issues that are really limited to women, to how to handle certain issues that come up with the women running for office, and I think that as an elected official—former elected official--we have an obligation to mentor, which is one of the reasons why I accepted coming here tonight--what a great forum--to all the ladies out there who are thinking about it. Because it gives you an opportunity to hear things that you're not going to read about in a book necessarily. I'm not, you know, I don't know what's in your books, I haven't read them yet. but, it--think about it with sincerity, think about the resources, the training, and think quite honestly, maybe you're not, you know, maybe it's not elected office, but why not an appointed public position? Those can be very high profile. look at, you know, President Obama's cabinet. You know, look at the state, you know, directors.

The power and the responsibility and the commitment that's needed for those jobs. So everyone may not be cut out to be an elected office holder. You know, you need skin this thick and, you know, you give up--I look back now and I think where did the years go, but I don't regret it, but I tell people that if you don't in your heart think that elected office is for you, there are other ways that you can serve that will make a difference and help propel women and keep that next generation of women available. The numbers are going down and we don't want the numbers to go down. When I came in as the first African-American woman in the City Council and Treasurer and Lieutenant Governor, I want the door to stay open for some more women to walk behind me, and unless we do that as a committed group and hold out and mentor and share the tips for raising money or how to put together a campaign and all of those things that go into being successful, the numbers will continue to go down, because it is a--it's a different life, it's a different lifestyle. But there's a lot of good that can be done.

**CLIFT:** we're going to open this up to questions in just a few minutes and I think, just to set up the questions, why don't each of you sort of sight what you see as an obstacle that's still out there for women getting elective office, and then say one thing you love about your job. We start on—ha ha--whoever wants to start.

**BRADLEY:** Marsha hasn't spoken.



**CLIFT:** You start.

**BLACKBURN:** Well, I can absolutely tell you what I love about my job is the people. And working with the constituents in my district and helping to solve the problems they feel like that they face every, every single day, and what a joy to meet with them, to work with them, and to think there is a way that I really can help them to address these specific issues or point them the right direction. The obstacles that are still out there for women--many times, I look at these as being either internal obstacles or external obstacles. And I kind of divide those into the 2 camps. Sometimes those internal obstacles that we have are the fear of failure and what are people going to say if we don't win. And the other is risk aversion, and many times women are much more risk averse than men are. Women will think about, "What am I going to do if I compromise my life savings? What am I going to do if I compromise the time to my family? What are others going to think of me if I leave something that is certain and stable and then move into the political arena? How is going to affect my children if I do that?"

So that risk aversion seems to carry forward as an internal. The external that are out there, you've heard many of these mentioned. Grace summed it the good 'ol boy network and I like to say we're the great new gals. And uh, maybe is that it is time for us--there are those set networks, and as Madeleine said, sometimes we're not in those rooms where those decisions are made, so, therefore, we're not privy to that information. We have to find workarounds on that. As Jeannette said, having individuals in the pipeline, encouraging women to look for open doors are ways that we can make certain that there are people that we can be pushing up. Leaders always raise up other leaders, and that's a very important thing for us to be doing, but at the same time, as we are pulling people up, it gives people to surround us and to help and encourage us. So that's a good thing for us to invest our time and energy in doing.

Now, Eleanor, one of the things that has been helpful to me that I think is a great equalizer is having websites and having the internet, so that you have a forum to get your ideas out there that people can read through what you stand for and how you approach issues, and that is a wonderful tool that I think is available to women. One of the reasons is because it is not as expensive as many other outlets, and the other is because you have the ability to move that forward with a viral networking, and that works very well for women, and we have actually been successful in using it as a fundraising tool, and for women, I think that it's, um, it is a great way to get those small dollar contributions in. And Mazie talked about the network she has in Hawaii. This is how you get women started thinking in terms of what is it going to be. Uh, dinner out, lunch, a pair of shoes, a handbag, and making those equivalencies, but internet makes it easy for them to given websites--make it easy for them to come and participate and to encourage you along the way.

**CLIFT:** Ok, I think in the interest of time, we do want to take questions and there are—there is a mic--there are microphones set up on either side. So I hope you will come



forward. If not, I will continue along here. I wanted you each to say something that you loved about your job. We want to--

**NAPOLITANO:** Well, I can--I can tell you--

**BRADLEY:** Entice people into the profession--

**KUNIN:** Give 'em time to get up and line up.

**CLIFT:** Right.

**NAPOLITANO:** Well, one of the stumbling blocks I see is the--not stumbling—but something that sometimes may threaten women, especially like in California, where you have term limits, and the state legislators are now looking for a place to land because they're termed out, so they're looking now to ace out those that are already in office. Um, but that's not a problem, and you hit the nail on the head, Marsha, on certain things. Women sometimes don't want to be the first one to be out there. Uh, is somebody leading the way? Well, there's been a lot of role models in our area. Excuse me.

**CLIFT:** Ok. Yeah, let's take the questions, ok? Uh, over here and then we'll go over to this side. Ok.

**GEORGE:** Hi, my name's George, and as a women's studies major, it's both an honor and an inspiration to hear all of you guys talk, so this is really a great experience, but, um--

**WOMAN:** An enlightened man.

**SECOND WOMAN:** A young man. Yay!

**GEORGE:** My question to you is we've talked a lot tonight about what women can do, obviously, which is the point of the panel, and it's been an incredible discussion, but what can men do in this--in the environment of politics and that kind of situation--I'm kind of hunched over here, I'm sorry--um, I know, like, it's my goal to get involved in politics somehow and do my best, but, obviously, I know there are other men out there like me who want to help women get involved as well. So what can we do as an entire group to do our best to get involved?

**NAPOLITANO:** first of all, you're talking about your peers or women who are running?

[Talking at once]

**NAPOLITANO:** No, no, I know, but if he's talking about peers who they may be already leadership in, uh, uh, evolving--



**GEORGE:** Both.

**NAPOLITANO:** In your area, and those women who you say, "Well, maybe, you might be good on a commission or a committee, or then going to City Council, or aldermen, whatever"-- or if it's somebody that's already running, go knock on their door and say, "I want to volunteer. I'm willing to put in this "X" amount of time, and I can bring some friends who feel like I do, that women, we have--we should have the equality to be able to participate in men elections and--as well as women elections."

**CLIFT:** Also, sharing in housework and childcare is good.

[Laughter] [Applause]

**GEORGE:** I wash the dishes, we're good.

**KUNIN:** Basically being supportive not only--I agree, the housework, the cooking, the shopping, the driving, but emotionally supportive--uh, uh, my advice to the women and the men here is before you get married or partnered, have a discussion about what your future is going to be, what your career goals are, who's going to do what and put it out there on the table. Uh, I've been very fortunate, I have 4 children, uh, uh, my, my former husband was very supportive of my running, my present husband is very supportive of my life, and, fortunately, I think young men your age, um, are more open to that kind of a relationship, but you can't do it by yourself without your family, your friends--

**CLIFT:** Support.

**KUNIN:** And it's not just the fundraising, it's not just going door to door, it's somebody who will tell you at the end of a really rough day, "I still love you." A friend who will take you out to lunch no matter how you voted on an issue.

[Laughter]

And so, it's very important to have supportive men, and not only in the family sense, but also if you run for office, to treat women as equals, which I think usually happens. I don't happen to think there's gender bias, until, in most places--now, there are exceptions--I don't think there's gender bias in running for local office, for state legislature, except maybe in South Carolina, which now has the only state senate with not a single woman on it--uh, in it--but there is an unconscious gender bias when you get to the top, when you run for president or when you're the CEO of a corporation. Then, I think, the discussion changes, because we haven't had enough role models, we haven't had any woman president role model, and women are caught sometimes in a double bind, where they have to be tough enough to do the job and feminine enough to be feminine. We're all



nodding because we know this. Up here, anyway. And it's very hard to get it just right. We saw this with Hillary. We saw it in a different way with Sarah Palin. Um, I'll stop there.

**BLACKBURN:** I would add one thing for George, uh, and for all of you, and young men especially right now. As you look at how you can plug into the system, whether it is on the political side or the public side—public service side—which are different sides of the same coin. I would encourage you to remember this--that 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership has organizations that are much flatter, and they are looking for individuals to lead who are thinkers, who are nurturers, who are focused on outcomes. All of those are more feminine-type leadership skills, and I would just encourage you to find a woman who will help to mentor you.

[Laughter]

**CLIFT:** Ok.

[Applause]

**HIRONA:** I-I'd just like to say really short—very short--George--

**CLIFT:** Yeah, let's--we want to get to the questions, so please keep your--

**HIRONA:** Support the woman.

**CLIFT:** Over here.

**HIRONA:** Start there.

**WOMAN:** I would like to ask the folks to comment on what you think we should do as a society, given what many of us believe was a pretty amazing amount of gender bias at this past presidential election. It was directed against candidates of both parties. It came from both women and men in the media and as someone who helped start the women's movement myself back in the seventies and helped integrate, I don't think I've ever, in 35 years or 40 years, seen the--been so ashamed and so shocked at what appeared to be a retrogression in the political life of the country.

[Applause]

**NAPOLITANO:** Well, part of it, I think, to me, was the media.

**WOMAN:** Well, that's what I'm asking. What should we do?



**NAPOLITANO:** The media is one that I felt, on a personal basis--they set a lot of the tone. Secondly, was the ability to raise the money. And to me, those were the 2, and I'll let my colleagues answer because I don't want to hog it.

**CLIFT:** Madeleine, do you want to take that?

**KUNIN:** Well, I think we can blame it on the media somewhat, but I think the media, doesn't--does often reflect where public opinion is, and I'm not saying that just because you're here, Eleanor, but I think--

**CLIFT:** Well, and we say the media, we're often thinking of the cable news. They have a lot--they have a lot of time to fill and they look for provocative ways to present things, and they're--and it's pretty male dominated, as well.

**KUNIN:** What's--what's—what is shocking was it became ok to say these things. You know, on the cable networks, on talk radio, and it was so crude, um, but, I think also, to some extent, women pushed back. You know, just before the New Hampshire primary, you all probably remember this so-called moment of welling up of tears of Hillary when she was speaking to a group of people in a diner, and everybody went berserk. You know, she either—some people said, "Ah, the ice maiden has melted." Another group would say, Shows she can't do it. She's too emotional, she can't be Commander-in-Chief."

**CLIFT:** My favorite was the ones who said it was calculated, she--that was the best.

[All talking at once]

**KUNIN:** It was faked.

**NAPOLITANO:** May I interject?

**KUNIN:** I just want to finish the sentence, because after all that fuss, she won the New Hampshire primary, and I think the reason she did was women got mad and to answer your question, I think we have to push back. You cannot just be silent when you hear or read or see these things and the media does become aware of it, so I think we have to use our power as consumers to bring up these issues and our—our interpretation and our discomfort or even anger with them.

**BRADLEY:** We're changing in this society. I'm sorry.

**HIRONA:** Go ahead.

**BRADLEY:** We're changing and you were saying, "What can we do?" I will still say teach our children well because I think we were led by the younger generation who really threw



away some of the old stereotypes in politics today and there's this idealism that we have, but we are required, just in our everyday life--it's not just when someone is running for office and there are the crude or the rude statements made on television--it starts when they're made in the mall, it starts when people aren't recognizing social stereotypes. We all have a responsibility to address those issues, and I think that this society has made such great strides and that's why some of those things didn't work the way they did, because people were intelligent enough to know that it wasn't true or it wasn't fair and I think we still need to do that. The younger generation. We are making great strides because our younger people aren't carrying these same stereotypes that have—that we've been fighting for so many years, and we're breaking away from that, so I'm very happy that you are paving the way, so...

**CLIFT:** Over here.

**MAUREEN:** I'm Maureen, and I was just wondering what kind of advice you had for young people trying to get into office and politics.

**BLACKBURN:** Become a volunteer.

**NAPOLITANO:** Volunteer.

**Both:** Volunteer.

**NAPOLITANO:** Learn from the ground up. Volunteer for city, for school board, for the Archives. Get on a program. Learn from the bottom up. Then you understand better how to advocate on behalf of issues. Uh, I was a volunteer for 19 years, learning how to present budgets, how to go before the City Council to ask funding. Learn how to put programs together, so that we would have exchange programs with the sister cities in Mexico. In other words, if you really are interested, you're going to have to have a wide var--background to be able to understand where you will fit in.

**BLACKBURN:** The other thing I would add to that is to remember that leadership is a transferable commodity, and the leadership skills that you develop in one arena you can take with you to another. And so, you need to be keeping a good resume file for yourself, because you will see a pattern through that, of the things that you are really wonderful with. When I was running for office, I came up upon a man in a diner in west Tennessee, walked up to him, handed him my push card, said, "Sure would appreciate having your vote." And he kind of cocked his eye up at me, and didn't even stop eating, and, um, looked at me and said, "Little lady, what qualifies you to run for the U.S. House of Representatives?" And--this ties back to what you were saying, Madeleine--I looked at him and I said, "Well, you know, I've been the 3-year old choir director, the room mother, the room mother chairman and the girl scout cookie mom, and if you can do those jobs, you can handle the U.S. House of Representatives."



And so, you know, you're going to have this wide range of experiences at your age, so start a file in your computer filing system and save it and put all of your experiences in there so that you can build that track record of what is uniquely you.

**KUNIN:** I agree with what everybody has said. I would say you've taken the first step just now by asking a question. Um, and a lot of girls, women your age are afraid to speak up, so I would encourage you to continue asking questions, to continue to give answers, to raise your hand and to know what's going on in your community, in your state, in the world, whether you do it online or you do the old-fashioned thing like we did and buying an actual newspaper. But you have to be informed about events. And also curiosity. Be curious about other people's lives. And, finally, believe in your own ideals. Hold on to your idealism, whatever it may be. You know, people will tell you you're naïve or you're too innocent, or--those are good things. Those are good things.

**CLIFT:** We have one more last question here.

**ASHLEY:** Hello, my name is--

**CLIFT:** Persistence also pays off. Yes?

**ASHLEY:** Hello, my name is Ashley, and I was wondering as to what you thought on how bureaucracy impedes women's progress.

**KUNIN:** How bureaucracy impedes--

**ASHLEY:** How bur--sorry, how bureaucracy impedes women's progress, the bureaucratic system.

[Several people talking at once]

**CLIFT:** In other words, men in power hiring people who look like them? Is that what you mean?

**NAPOLITANO:** I call them men in suits. Or the suits.

[All talking at once]

**HIRONA:** I don't think it's necessarily bureaucracy.

**KUNIN:** You know, most women aren't in Washington, D.C. because the bureaucracy is more equal. Most women in position--higher management positions--are here. Maybe you mean something else.



**ASHLEY:** Well, it's because the SES is only composed of about like-- the senior executive service--

**BRADLEY:** Yes, I agree with that.

**ASHLEY:** Is only composed of about 28% of women, opposed to like 72% of men, and that's where the laws are implemented. So I was wondering as to what your thoughts about how the bureaucratic system impedes women's progress, because it's great to get the laws written, but then once they go on to the executive branch, know they're channeled through men's ideas.

**BLACKBURN:** now this is another example of--and we've all talked a little bit about it— just making certain that there are women coming behind you and the importance of mentoring and encouragement and being there to help them step to the next rung.

**BRADLEY:** I think that's where equal opportunity--you're talking about, you know, that's the equal opportunity on competency, and that has to be pushed, and for the young man, you know, if you're in the position, make sure that women have the same opportunities to achieve and to apply for jobs. That's--you know, that's not in politics, that's still one of those obstacles that we're dealing with in certain fields to this day. So, women, we have to know it, we have to push for it and be vocal and be willing to be that first one to break the barrier. I always say that. You have to be willing to be that trailblazer, and that's always the rocky path, but just know that when you break through, the next person--woman--coming along will have an easier time of it.

**NAPOLITANO:** Actually, just to touch on that point, though. Um, many of--well, the Women's Caucus in Congress has looked--been looking forward to, or looking at the, um, um, personnel patterns, if you will, of the different agencies, and this was way back. I haven't been as involved as I should've the last few years.

But what they found out was that there was no parity in some of the agencies. I can tell you, the Hispanic Caucus, of which I am a member, we asked the agencies, would--excuse me--not only your hiring, but are you elevating in your supervisory areas, minorities who look like the rest of the country and not one specific color, whether it's white, brown, yellow, whatever, and you'll find that they have been for years along the same track. And that's something that you as a resident, you as somebody who is an absorber, needs to get the word to whoever, whether it's the Women's Caucus or other agencies, and say, "This does not look right. What are you going to do about it?" And bring you as the leader, or as a rising leader, saying to us, "Take a look at it." And let's start asking questions and begin to open the door to more that looked like the rest of America.

**CLIFT:** Well, I want to thank the panel. This is the age of diversity and we have made enormous strides, but you still have to have people at the barricades and you still have to



have people counting and watching and, you know, I think that's what we're all going to be doing, and thank you so much for your kind attention. I hope you leave as inspired, uh, as I feel.

Thank you.

[Applause]

**THORA COLOT:** We have, um, many partners. We have many, many thanks from all of the partners involved in tonight's event, but we wanted to give everybody on the stage here tonight your own copy of the 19th amendment, and I haven't looked up in numerology what all those 19's mean, but I hope it's good things for our futures. Thank you all.

**CLIFT:** Well, I-I wrote a book on the 19th amendment, and when I was called to write the book, um, I wasn't even quite sure what the 19th amendment was. I thought it was maybe prohibition. That was the 18th amendment. So I had to learn. It isn't something I learned in school, and it's a fascinating story, so...

**COLOT:** Well, we're real proud that we hold the documents here like these, and, obviously, all of you who have worked with the federal government, we have your records, too. So, thank you all very much.

[Applause]

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