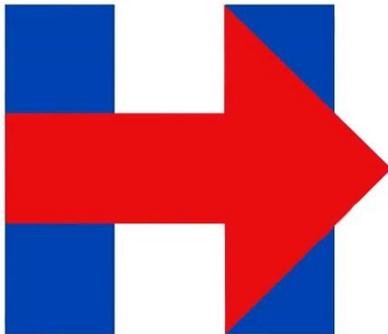


***“You see, I believe we have a moral obligation to protect our children no matter what ZIP code they live in—to reduce violence, especially gun violence. To stand up against systemic racism and to promote justice and equality.”***

**Hillary Clinton’s Remarks at Circle of Mothers Conference  
Pledging Gun Reforms  
Fort Lauderdale, FL  
May 21, 2016**



Good evening. What a great honor it is for me to be here with all of you, and to have a chance to see some of the mothers that I’ve gotten to know over the last months and to meet others of you who are here for this weekend.

I think it’s fair to say that the program has already been amazing. Just here during dinner—and I know you had other sessions this weekend—but here during dinner, I have to say that Rebecca Vaughns was just astonishing.

And Jill Tracey kept us all in line. I don’t know if you could notice where you were sitting, but she has on the coolest-looking red tennis shoes—underneath that elegant, long, flowing black dress. And Queene Thompson Brown spoke to our hearts. Just unleash that, because you have a powerful message.

I want to thank La Vie. I want to thank Minister Wanda Johnson, and Pastor Gregory Williams, and Kat Tynes. Kat Tynes has on the highest high heels I think I’ve ever seen. I was just knocked over when Kat came up here. They sparkle, but they’re like a foot high. I had to give up wearing high heels 10 years ago. I am so jealous.

But the sisterhood that is here is so overwhelming in its love, and I am grateful to see all of you and it in action. I want to thank Sybrina and her entire family, who stand behind her, for bringing us together. Trayvon’s parents, Sybrina and Mr. Tracy Martin, and his brother, Jahvaris, and his grandmother—because as Sybrina said, she’s from a line of strong women, and I’ve met Marion Evans, for the first time in South Carolina, and am happy to see her again tonight—have demonstrated what it really means to have a family in the worst of times.

I appreciate the elected officials who are here, including my longtime friend, Congressman Alcee Hastings, who I've known a long, long time. And Barbara Jordan, and Dennis Moss, and Oliver Gilbert, and Dorothy Bendross Mindingall.

But most of all, I thank all the mothers and fathers, but mostly the circle of mothers, who are turning your grief into action, and so importantly, reaching out to support other parents who face the unimaginable.

I've had the great privilege of getting to know Sybrina over the last months. Even before I met her, I knew something important about her. Like a lot of people, I watched—I watched in disbelief and horror—when her son was killed.

But then I saw her talking about her love for Trayvon, urging people who were devastated by his death to make America a more peaceful place. She was joined by Trayvon's father. I can remember seeing that on television. One reporter described them as “models of grace and fortitude.”

When I met Sybrina for myself, that's exactly what I saw. It takes a special kind of person to endure a loss like all of you, and then find a way to turn it into service.

That's what Sybrina has done. That's what many of you have done.

Sybrina said, “This is not something I ever wanted to do.” She said, “I can't help Trayvon, but there are a lot of other Trayvon Martins I can help.”

That's true for all of us. There are a lot of other young men and young women we all can help.

You see, I believe we have a moral obligation to protect our children no matter what ZIP code they live in—to reduce violence, especially gun violence. To stand up against systemic racism and to promote justice and equality. I believe we owe that to our children, and we owe it to the parents who love their children more than anything, especially those whose love persists after they were so tragically taken from them.

Sybrina and I were talking at the table about the weekend that has been provided for the mothers who are here, and I had the great honor of meeting each of the mothers, the “Circle of Mothers,” before we came in.

Some lost their children to gun violence.

Others died after encounters with police, or because of domestic violence.

Each mother handed me a letter. Actually, they put it in a basket—put it in a basket that Sybrina’s mother, I think, made possible. They handed me that letter, and I’m going to read every single word of these letters, because each of the mothers is telling us something that we all need to hear, not just about their tragedies, but about our country.

Something is wrong when so many young people just starting their lives are dying.

Something is wrong when so many Americans have reason to believe that our country doesn’t consider their children as precious and worthy of protection as other children because of the color of their skins.

Something is wrong when so many parents live in fear that their child will be hurt or killed, just for being a young black man in a hooded sweatshirt, like Trayvon; or listening to music in a car, like Jordan Davis, whose mother Lucy is here; or for standing in a park with her friends, like Hadiya Pendleton, whose mother Cleo is here; or simply going to first grade, like Ben Wheeler’s mother knows, a student at Sandy Hook Elementary School—Ben’s mother Francine is here too.

Something is very wrong, my friends. And this election gives us a chance to keep trying to make it right.

I come here tonight as a mother and a grandmother. I love my daughter and my granddaughter more than anything, and I worry about them like every mother does. I want them always to be safe.

But I also come here as someone who’s been fighting for children my entire life. And I’m going to keep talking about these issues every chance I get, because there’s nothing more important than protecting our children. If we fail at that, it really doesn’t matter what else we get right.

So we have got to face up to all of the barriers that are denying children the opportunities they deserve, that enable people to see some children as less than what they truly are—talented, beautiful, and beloved.

We've got to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline that wrongly diverts too many kids into the criminal justice system. We've even seen an uptick—a significant uptick—in police involvement in school discipline, especially in communities of color. We're seeing an overreliance on suspensions and expulsions. Some of you may remember that video of the girl in South Carolina being thrown out of her desk and dragged across her classroom floor by a school officer. Classrooms should be safe places for all children. That should go without saying.

And yes, we need to continue to fight for criminal justice reform. Our legal system is often stacked against those who have the least power and are the most vulnerable. Let's get back to that fundamental principle: everyone benefits when there is respect for the law and when everyone is respected by the law. And this is actually an area where a lot of Democrats and Republicans agree—we need to end the era of mass incarceration; rebuild the bonds of trust between law enforcement and communities; and do something about the horror, the tragedy of too many young African Americans being killed by police or dying in custody.

The mothers of Dontre Hamilton and Eric Garner are here tonight. They, along with Sandy Bland's mother, and so many others across the country, are doing their part to make sure no one else's children die like theirs did.

They deserve our complete and total support.

And we need to protect the health of our children, and that includes their mental health. Nearly 17 million children in America experience mental health problems. Some of those kids don't get treatment. They grow up to adults, and then they cause harm to others. We need to make sure the next generation grows up in a country where there's no shame or stigma, no barriers to anyone seeking and needing mental health care.

And, at long last, we must do something about the gun violence that stalks communities and terrorizes families. This is on the minds of every one of us here tonight as we remember all of the young people who have been lost. This problem isn't going away. Even toddlers are getting their hands on guns and shooting themselves or someone else. There have been, by last count, 23 cases of toddlers getting guns so far this year. I don't know what more evidence anybody needs in our country to know that somebody has gone terribly wrong.

We are smart enough and strong enough as a nation to figure out how to protect the rights of responsible gun owners while keeping guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, other violent criminals, gang members, the severely mentally ill. I know we can do this.

And despite all the political noise, we are actually united on this issue. The vast majority of Americans support comprehensive background checks. In fact, the conservative pollster Frank Luntz found that 82 percent of gun owners and 74 percent of NRA members support background checks for anyone buying a gun. Democrats and Republicans overwhelmingly support them. So do leaders in law enforcement.

So this isn't a matter of building popular support. We already have it. This is a matter of making elected officials do their jobs to keep our children safe.

Now, we know the gun lobby is powerful. I believe it's the most powerful lobby in Washington. And we know that some candidates will say or do anything to keep them happy.

Just yesterday at the NRA's annual convention, Donald Trump said that in his very first hour as president, heaven forbid, he would overturn President Obama's actions to strengthen background checks. Remember, President Obama took those steps after the massacres at Mother Emanuel in Charleston and Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut.

Then Mr. Trump went further. He said that also on his first day in office, he'd mandate that every school in America allow guns in classrooms. Every school, he said. That idea isn't just way out there, it's dangerous. 33,000 people die from guns every year, nearly 3,000 children and teenagers among them. Parents, teachers, and schools should have the right to keep guns out of classrooms, just like Donald Trump does at many of his hotels, by the way.

This is someone running to be president of the United States of America, a country facing a gun violence epidemic, and he's talking about more guns in our schools. He's talking about more hatred and division in our streets, even about more nuclear weapons in the world. That's no way to keep us safe.

If you want to imagine what Trump's America will look like, picture more kids at risk of violence and bigotry. Picture more anger and fear. Ask any of the mothers here tonight if

they want to live in that kind of America. Enough is enough. Unlike Donald Trump, I will not pander to the gun lobby. And we will not be silenced. And we will not be intimidated. As long as children anywhere are being killed by gun violence, we will keep fighting for our kids—because they deserve a president who stands up for them and stands with the mothers here. Their lives are valuable.

Now, there's a lot more I could say tonight about what we need to do to better serve our kids, from education to health care to jobs. But here's the bottom line: Anyone asking for your vote owes it to you to fully grapple with the real challenges facing our families and communities. We owe it to you to listen and come up with solutions—not scapegoats, solutions—that would make a difference in your children's lives.

And to the mothers and fathers who have lost children, we owe you our love, our support, our gratitude, and our promise that we will carry the memories of your sons and daughters in our hearts every day, just like you do.

One of the best experiences of this campaign for me has been getting to know Mothers of the Movement, Sybrina and so many of the other women here tonight. They are turning their sorrow into a strategy and their mourning into a movement. I've had the opportunity to sit and listen as they talk about their kids and their families. And I've seen how you gain strength from each other.

That's why tomorrow I hope you will take what you have gotten here this weekend back to your communities, to your families, to your loved ones, because it really does take a village.

It takes a village to raise a child, to protect a child, to mourn a child, and to honor a child. So we've got to stand together and lift each other up and draw strength from each other. Running for president's hard, I got to tell you. But it's nothing like what I have seen the mothers do and what I have learned from every one whom I have met. Your courage and your commitment and your leadership is inspirational to me.

I want to close with a passage from Scripture that means a great deal to me, and I know has meant a great deal to Sybrina.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

We may never, never be able to understand the senseless violence that has affected the lives in this room and so many others who you are standing for across our country. But there is a path ahead of us. There is work for us to do.

And it is up to us to do that work, and to walk that path, with trust that progress is possible; with love for all our children, no matter their race or background; and with the memory of those we've lost lighting our way toward the future every child in this country deserves.

I am here tonight to say thank you to this circle of mothers, and to say God bless you all and God bless your families. Thank you so very much.