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**Remarks by Stephen Lewis, Co-Director of AIDS-Free World,  
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*"Mass rape proceeds apace in the Congo and Zimbabwe while the world watches", Lewis says.*

This is my last formal speech in 2008. I'd like to use the occasion as a kind of stream-of-consciousness to indulge in some cumulative, and very personal reflections.

The organizers have been kind enough to allow me to range broadly over the issue of sexual violence in conflict, and that I shall do.

This audience will surely agree that it's impossible to discuss sexual violence without the recognition that it's rooted in gender inequality. In my lifetime, I've had the extraordinary benefit of being influenced on matters of gender by three women.

The first is, predictably, my wife, Michele Landsberg. She's had a hugely distinguished career in journalism in Canada where her uncompromising principles, and the gifted, searing, inspired, knowledgeable pen of a columnist at Canada's largest daily newspaper, helped to shape the feminist sensibilities of more than a generation of young women and men. When we met and married, I was an active democratic socialist with a fragile grip on feminism. I am now an active feminist with a fragile grip on socialism. Thus does life change. Michele has said, on many occasions, usually from a public platform, that it took her twenty years to turn me into a human being, and the next twenty-five were then mildly tolerable.

The relevance to the subject at hand is clear: everything must be measured through the lens, the prism of feminism. I've learned that you can never approximate the objectives of social justice

and equality by marginalizing fifty-two per cent of the world's population. The struggle for gender equality is the most important struggle on the planet, and nowhere is this more evident than in issues of sexual violence.

The second is my closest friend and collaborator for well more than a decade, and co-Director of AIDS-Free World, Paula Donovan. Paula has, over the years, unflinchingly kept me on track around international issues of gender when my Pavlovian male egocentricity threatened to derail or undermine what we were jointly fighting to attain. She is as intellectually tough and principled as they come, and it's frankly a Godsend to have a feminist with nerves of steel in every fray. It sure keeps you on the straight and narrow. And I daresay that I would never have been seen as someone competent to speak on sexual violence were it not for the laser clarity in direction, the probing analysis, and often the very words of Paula Donovan. I have filched shamelessly from Paula's framing of the issues over the years.

And again, the relevance to tonight is clear. You can't equivocate about feminist analysis; you can't seek some clever compromise to get past the tough stuff. You can't finesse the reality of what's being done to women around the world. Yet that's exactly what we've been doing with sexual violence: it won't wash.

And the third woman will be surprised when I tender her name, because Eve Ensler and I have known each other for barely a year. I was of course familiar with the Vagina Monologues --- my wife and older daughter saw the first-ever opening night performance in New York --- and I was vaguely familiar with Eve's movement, V-Day. But I was catapulted into renewed awareness about sexual violence in conflict when I read the astonishing and annihilating piece that Eve wrote in Glamour Magazine, September 2007, after returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Life, for me, has not been quite the same from that day to this.

It wasn't that I was unconscious. But like everyone else, I needed that jolt to my moral and intellectual gestalt to focus again on what's really important in life. There's a lot to be said for repetition. The relevance lies in the need to hammer home, relentlessly, the issue of sexual violence, even to the converted, so that we trigger a shift from commonplace recognition to imperative action.

I used the phrase "renewed awareness about sexual violence" deliberately, because it reflects three reverberations in my life.

In the mid-1990's, I served as coordinator of a UN study, titled "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children". It was led by the remarkable Graça Machel who had been appointed as the 'Expert' by the United Nations, and who spent the better part of two years traveling the world, closely examining the situation of children trapped in conflicts. Many perverse and wretched truths emerged, but the most disconcerting was the evidence that in several cases of United Nations peacekeeping operations, the peacekeepers themselves sexually abused children under their protection, or even sold them into trafficking. I remember how incredulous we were that this could possibly be happening, and happening with a kind of vengeance that damaged the kids forever.

Around the same time, I assumed a role as Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF in charge of programming internationally. One of the most torrid and terrifying of the hot-spots was the

situation of children in Northern Uganda. This audience will know that the 1990's were the heyday of The Lord's Resistance Army (the LRA), which indiscriminately raided boarding schools and rural communities, abducting children by the thousands and taking them across the border into Sudan. The boys were forced to become child soldiers; the girls were turned into sex slaves, and subject to the most horrendous sexual assaults.

I made a number of trips to Northern Uganda to interview the young women who had somehow escaped the LRA and returned to reception centres in the North.

It was quite an experience. These girls --- almost all of them adolescents --- had been so savagely violated that they were rendered virtually comatose of speech and emotion. Their entire lives were ruined. I was left shaken to the core by the insensate brutality of it all. And of course the civil war further exploded, resulting in vast and desolate camps of the internally displaced where patterns of sexual violence became endemic to the miseries of dislocation.

The final experience of resonance is the one that will live with me forever. From 1998 to 2000, I served as a member of a Panel, appointed by the Organization of African Unity, to investigate the genocide in Rwanda. It was no ordinary panel: it was chaired by the former President of Botswana, and had as other crucial members two Africans who are currently the Presidents of Liberia and Mali.

Visiting endless commemorative sites and interviewing significant numbers of survivors was, as you can imagine, deeply traumatic. But nothing prepared me for the episode I want to recount.

Towards the end of the study, the Panel visited the Polyclinique d'Espoir --- the Polyclinic of Hope --- in the Rwanda capital of Kigali, where several hundred women survivors gathered to network, to share their needs and hopes, and to seek solace from each other. We listened patiently to a long list of quite legitimate grievances, and then the leader of the group asked if we'd be prepared to meet separately with three women in an adjacent room who wanted to talk to us in private. Four members of the Panel agreed to do so.

We gathered in a sweltering little room, baking in the unrelieved heat that bore down on the tin roof. There were three metal cots in the room, and on each cot sat a woman.

The first was a young woman in her early twenties who had been raped repeatedly, blunt and sharp instruments thrust into her vagina for the sole purpose of causing excruciating pain ... she was HIV-positive and saw no reason for living. Alas, within two years of our meeting, she was dead.

The second woman was in her thirties, feisty, pugnacious and angry. She said, "You're always asking us to forgive and forget, but why should we forgive and forget when none of the men who raped us ever shows the slightest remorse? In fact," she added with great bitterness, "every morning when I look out my window, I see the men who raped me walking casually to work: why should I ever forgive? And I'll certainly never forget."

The third woman was a woman in her forties, of immense calm and dignity. She was inexpressibly sad, and quiet, and soft of expression, as though her soul had been gutted of emotional texture. She had been chained to a bed for three months, and used as a perpetual raping machine. She described what had happened in tones of deadened neutrality, and then she

uttered words that are seared into my mind ... she said: "Whether I'm in the fields, or at market, or at home, I can never get the smell of semen out of my nostrils." And I looked at that lovely woman, suffused with dignity, and thought 'has the world gone mad? It's the end of the twentieth century; how did we allow this to happen?'"

But of course, that was pure naiveté on my part; it is always happening, it goes on forever. From the decimation of aboriginal populations in North America, to the Armenian genocide, to the Third Reich, to the killing fields of Cambodia, to the Balkans, to the Rwandan genocide, to Liberia, to East Timor, to Darfur, to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to Kenya, to Zimbabwe ... it never ends. Millions of women through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries desecrated with malice aforethought.

There are, if I may, several questions to be considered and four potential courses of action to be taken.

What, conceivably, explains this compulsion to rape? It's possible to be facile or obvious and say that in the Congo, it's the lust for resources, and in Zimbabwe, it's politically-directed manipulation and punishment. But how to account for the extent of depravity, the twisted dementia, the medieval levels of brutality: physical torture, amputation of breasts, the killing of babies in the presence of their mothers, the shooting of guns into the vaginas of women? There's something unfathomable going on; there's a license to use rape as a weapon of mass destruction that's frankly beyond the capacity of most minds to comprehend or to explain.

And unself-consciously, although with mortification, let me admit defeat on that front. My life experience does not encompass an explanation.

No wonder Eve Ensler uses the term femicide; what more appropriate description?

But Eve says something else. She points out that in the Congo, for example, it's a very small percentage of the men who rape and maim. And of course she's right. But that begs my second question: why don't all the other men, on the ground and in high places, bring it to an end?

Quite simply, and without rhetorical adornment, what the hell is wrong with the world --- the men of the world --- that the catastrophe is allowed to continue?

I know I've covered this ground before, but let me encapsule it again: is there no shame in the corridors of multilateralism? We're practically at the end of the formal period of the Sixteen Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women ... why isn't the Secretary-General of the United Nations hollering, for example, on a daily basis, about what is happening in the Congo?

You have seventeen thousand peacekeepers in the Congo, mandated by the UN to protect the women against sexual violence, and they say that in a country so vast, they cannot begin to do so. Then why don't we have triple the number? The Security Council has agreed on an additional paltry three thousand troops. So where are they, when do they arrive? How is it that every Security Council resolution that deals with women isn't worth the paper it's written on? On October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000, the famous Resolution 1325 was passed stating that women should be involved in all peacekeeping, peacemaking and the resolution of armed conflicts. It is more than eight years later, and the Security Council resolution has yet to be used. Everyone celebrates 1325 as though it reflects divine intervention. Spare me the roiling hypocrisy: we've probably

had thirteen hundred and twenty-five opportunities to use it and it's never been employed. You don't celebrate impotence.

Just last January there was an ostensible settlement in the Congo. The so-called peace agreement was a fatuous manoeuvre in diplomatic sophistry. Why? Let me count the ways. The United Nations facilitated and, naturally, was present at the talks: not a single woman was at the table who carried influence and prestige; not a single woman was at the table to represent the raped women of the Congo. The document that emerged carried an amnesty provision so ambiguous as to exonerate the rapists. How do you have the United Nations involved in an exercise in impunity? Impunity is the gravest of violations, and here you have multilateralism consorting with the enemy. Why do no heads roll?

Worse still, the agreement dealt only with arms ... men and boys with guns. But we now know -- - certainly the rapists know --- that sexual violence is as much a weapon as an AK47. You can never have a peace settlement unless both aspects are dealt with. When will the men who pretend to orchestrate an end to war understand the contemporary architecture of conflict? It's not just guns. It's guns and rape: it's hopeless to deal with only one side of the equation.

But if I may drive the nail through the wall, there's more to it than that. My colleague, Paula Donovan, has argued and written eloquently about the transition of rape as a weapon of war to rape as a strategy of war. Simply put, men are well aware of the lowly but life-sustaining role that women play in their societies. Rape is used to subdue women, terrorize them, render them unable to farm and cook and collect water and firewood -- and so through them, to subdue entire communities.. We're not talking of incidental acts, horrific though all such acts may be. This is a predetermined strategy of conflict: easy, cheap, comprehensive and diabolical. It targets women because they are women. In other words, it is femicide. And the fact that the male leaders of the world are prepared to abide it speaks volumes.

And the men never seem to learn. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in the Congo made an appeal for additional troops ... at no time in all of the interviews that ran on television did he offer sexual violence as a rationale for the needed troops. So far as one could determine, they were meant only to prevent the fall of the Provincial capital of Goma. The Secretary-General then appointed the former President of Nigeria, Obasanjo, to treat for peace. Obasanjo promptly made arrangements to see the rebel leader, Nkunda, and Presidents Kabila and Kagame. There was not a single woman in the mix. Allow me to make the point that -- again, as Security Council Resolution 1325 stipulates, and anyone who's watching the carnage with both eyes open would know, women *must* be consulted and engaged. You cannot heal the running sores of rape and conflict and violence and sheer, unmitigated bestiality without embracing the women who are the targets. How often must that be said before it penetrates the encrusted cerebrums of men?

Oh yes, and the saga goes on: there was the heroic mission of concern jointly undertaken by the British Foreign Secretary, David Milliken and the French Foreign Secretary, Bernard Kouchner. True to form, there were many photo ops in Goma, and the promise of the three thousand additional troops that have not yet arrived. If only photo ops and promises could solve sexual violence.

On top of all of this, there is the woeful and continuing pattern of opportunities lost. In September of 2005, a meeting of Heads of State and Government agreed unanimously to create a new international principle called the Responsibility to Protect or, in the shorthand of multilateralism, “R2P”. The principle is stunning in its cogency and simplicity: if a sovereign state is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens from heinous violations of human rights, then the international community --- most often meaning the United Nations --- has the right, and indeed the obligation, to intervene. That intervention can be diplomatic, political, economic or military, just so long as the population is protected.

The initial target for R2P was Darfur. Having failed to respond to the genocide in Darfur --- the most recent conflict in which firewood and rape became inseparable --- the world should have employed R2P for determined intervention in the Congo. It is surely inarguable that in the case of the Congo, the government is both *unwilling and* unable to protect the women, particularly those in the resource-rich eastern region that borders Rwanda. Then why has the world failed to act?

So help me, the only possible explanation is that it’s women who are the victims. The men who run the world will disavow misogyny, but if gender inequality is not at the root of this paradigm of evil, then please tell me what is.

Women destroyed, families ruined, children in turmoil, sobs and anguish replacing joy and laughter, what is this all about?

I have such vivid memories of my years as UN Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa. The loss of life was a nightmare, and worse than a nightmare because it was so unnecessary. And of course, it was women who were doing most of the dying, because women are so disproportionately infected. We had the drugs to keep people alive; we knew what to do. We failed to do it. And please believe me, a failure of leadership lay at the heart of it ... a failure of leadership in countries like South Africa where the denialism of President Mbeki cost hundreds of thousands of lives (so help me, before I leave this planet I want to see that man and his certifiably demented Minister of Health brought before the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity); a failure of leadership within the international community, every member of which responded with a level of inertia and passivity that was unforgivable; a failure of leadership of the United Nations whose agencies, led by UNAIDS, were lamentably deficient in providing the energy, advocacy and sense of emergency that could have turned things around. I make no apology for these harsh judgments. And I’m prepared to document them in unassailable fashion.

But what lies at the heart of my own frustration and personal angst, is the recognition that extreme sexual violence leads to AIDS. They are inextricably linked. The tearing of women’s reproductive tracts causes cuts and abrasions through which the virus is transmitted: the horror of rape is compounded by the horror of HIV.

And so it happens again: women destroyed, families ruined, children in turmoil, sobs and anguish replacing joy and laughter. What is this all about? It’s about gender inequality.

And let it be understood that in the international arena, especially at the Security Council of the United Nations, everyone knows what’s happening. Indeed, so pronounced is the understanding that on June 19<sup>th</sup> last, the Security Council passed an unprecedented resolution --- Resolution

1820 ---asserting that sexual violence was a threat to international peace and security. Sexual violence thus ranks with HIV/AIDS and climate change as one of the only three issues, outside of conflict, that poses a direct threat to global peace and security.

It's December 8<sup>th</sup>. Almost six months have passed and not a single initiative has been taken on Resolution 1820. There is, to be sure, a consortium of UN agencies, together known as UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, purportedly involved in mitigating rape in the Congo and beyond, but with the greatest respect in the world, their collective impact has yet to be felt.

As a matter of fact --- and here's one to stain the historical record --- two weeks ago, the Secretary-General of the United Nations spoke at the opening of a conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union focused, on that particular day, exclusively on the Responsibility to Protect and sexual violence in conflicts. The Secretary-General talked of everything from the Nigerian-Cameroon border dispute (who knew there was one?!) to the international financial crisis. Not a word on women or on sexual violence. I was there, in the ECOSOC chamber, listening with complete incredulity.

I've talked about leadership. I've talked about missed opportunities. Where women are concerned, they're one and the same thing.

But no one should think that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has a lock on multilateral negligence.

Consider for a moment the case of Zimbabwe. Here is a country, headed by a megalomaniac, in complete and total disintegration. Its people are starving, its infrastructure has collapsed, a plague of Shakespearian proportions threatens, and everywhere the thugs of the ruling ZANU-PF party, Mugabe's personal Gestapo, brutalize the opposition. Sexual violence has become the vehicle of vengeance against the women who support the opposition. And now, in the last 72 hours, we have terrifying pre-dawn abductions of leading human rights activists. Who can tell if they'll ever be seen again?

As is probably known to many in this audience, AIDS-Free World has been taking affidavits from women who have been raped in the post-election chaos, so as to preserve the evidence for some future legal proceeding. I have neither the words nor the emotional equanimity to describe the features of the testimony. Suffice to say that women are suffering intolerable acts of politically-directed, merciless brutality. It has been commented on, it has been written about, but it commands no heightened concern from the international community.

The behaviour, until very recently, of the surrounding African leadership has been despicable, with the important exception of Botswana, and when he was alive, the late President Mwanawasa of Zambia. When the Southern African Development Community (SADC) met a few weeks back to discuss the abattoir of pain that Zimbabwe has become, they effectively did nothing, further strengthening ZANU-PF's feeling that it can act with impunity. It was unimaginable behaviour. Yes, Mugabe led a front-line state against apartheid. For that, credit was due. But there comes a point --- and that point has long been passed --- when the man of integrity becomes the man of villainy.

Apparently, that reality is slowly beginning to penetrate. Archbishop Tutu has demanded that Mugabe be dislodged, by force if necessary. It's frankly astonishing that Tutu would speak of the use of force; it shows just how desperate things have become. He's now joined in that injunction by Raila Odinga, the Prime Minister of Kenya, who has called for military intervention by the African Union, and failing that, by the United Nations. Then the African-based group known as "The Elders" --- led by Kofi Annan and Graça Machel --- attacked Mugabe frontally for his reign of iniquity. And of course the outside world is piling on, with Gordon Brown calling for an emergency Security Council meeting and Condoleezza Rice calling for Mugabe's removal.

On Thursday last, AIDS-Free World, twenty-four hours before Gordon Brown, called for an emergency meeting of the Security Council, but there the similarities between our appeals ends, and it allows me to make a point that I think is important.

What has spawned this sudden outpouring of anti-Mugabe resolve is the cholera epidemic in Zimbabwe. Without question, that's a reason to act, but it's hardly the only reason, and it's a reason very late in the day. When we sent our letter to every individual member of the Security Council, asking for an emergency meeting, we did so --- and said so --- because we believe that Zimbabwe is poised for another ghastly torrent of sexual violence. That should be the strongest basis for intervention. That should have triggered intervention before now. But as always, what happens to women is seen as a peripheral addendum.

God it's ugly. And I will admit that it's not easy to find the signals of hope.

But hope there is: it comes in four ways.

First, it's vital to raise consciousness and keep the pressure on. Eve Ensler's V-Day is promoting and organizing several hundred teach-ins across the United States over the next several months. As you'll learn by visiting their website, [www.vday.org](http://www.vday.org), the teach-ins will give people a strong sense of all the issues around sexual violence, with special reference to the Congo. Ending violence against women requires awareness, indignation, a sense of justice and indomitable tenacity. Talking about the situation of women in conflict and beyond (it's important to remember sex trafficking, female genital mutilation, honour killings, child brides, acid attacks, stoning, the absence of property and inheritance rights, domestic violence ... the entire panoply of discrimination and injustice visited on women), must become the sine qua non of daily life.

In addition to the teach-ins, one of the most remarkable men of Africa will be making a speaking tour of the United States through the month of February. He's Dr. Denis Mukwege, who heads the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu in the Eastern Congo. He and his colleagues are the surgeons who attempt to repair the reproductive tracts of victims of brutal rapes as the women turn up, more than ten a day, at the hospital's door. Mukwege is as close to a saint as I've encountered in the last several years: principled, intense but serene, a consummate communicator in his own French language that translates superbly into English, a true feminist, gripped by an all-consuming determination to bring the nightmare for the women of the Congo to an end. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, here in New York, the United Nations will confer its human rights award on Dr. Mukwege, an award that's given only once every five years. Then on December 12<sup>th</sup>, in Geneva, Dr. Mukwege has been invited to join a gathering in honour of Human Rights Day, and read a citation from Nelson Mandela. He deserves every tribute that is heaped upon him.

Second, support should be given to the magnificent and courageous women on the ground in places like the Congo and Zimbabwe so that they can organize a mass movement of response. There are many small activist women's groups that don't have a penny to buy cell phones, or computers, or send letters, or be in touch with one another to lobby for legislative change (ie, enforceable laws against rape and sexual violence). They can use funding and expressions of solidarity from all of us. The same is true for the needs of the Panzi Hospital. If contacts are wanted, don't hesitate to contact AIDS-Free World through its website, [www.aids-freeworld.com](http://www.aids-freeworld.com).

Third, intense pressure must be brought to bear on the United Nations, including a barrage of messages to the Secretary-General and heads of agencies. But there's something else that can be done of even greater importance.

In early 2006, the Secretary-General of the United Nations struck a High-Level Panel on System-Wide coherence ... a typically clunky title that was simply meant trying to bring order to various parts of the UN system. The Panel had twelve men and three women, which provoked an appropriate outcry and insistent demands that issues of gender be included in the mix.

And lo' and behold, the outcry worked, and they were included. There followed many months of deliberation within the Panel, with relentless pressure applied by many --- including by my AIDS-Free World colleagues and I --- to have a recommendation on the need for a separate international agency exclusively for women, just as UNICEF deals separately with children.

The Panel reported at the end of 2006, and to everyone's amazement --- and the distress of various territorial fanatics within the UN --- it recommended the creation of a new international entity for women. The recommendation was based on the Panel's findings that the UN's record on women, both internally and externally --- let me not beat around the bush --- was abysmal. We were frankly ecstatic about this decision while still understanding that there were many hurdles to leap.

Throughout 2007 and 2008, the UN wrestled with the concept of the emerging entity, amid initial consternation that this would mean that UNIFEM (the tiny UN Fund for Women), and DAW (the Department for the Advancement of Women) and OSAGI (the Office of the Special Advisor on Women) would be folded into one much larger entity. Things have advanced so far that the Secretary-General has been asked by the Member States to table the 'architecture' of the new entity -- that is, to describe what it would look like and how it would be governed.

Initially, four models were suggested that are now being refined. The two that have greatest traction are first, a kind of hybrid, resembling a complex anatomy of existing structures, and second, the creation of an independent fund or programme much like UNICEF or UNFPA. AIDS-Free World categorically embraces the idea of a separate fund. It's a model that worked for UNICEF; there is no reason to reinvent the wheel, or to give women something less.

But whatever emerges -- and it will probably emerge by the summer of 2009 -- must have, in our opinion, an Under Secretary-General at the head, a starting budget of one billion dollars annually (merely one-third of UNICEF's present income), and operational capacity on the ground, so that the new agency can design and run programmes with governments, and support and fund a wide

range of women's groups, as well as exerting influence on the specific country government and the UN family in that country.

If we do have such an agency by 2009, it will be a triumph. Never has any alteration to the UN structure moved with such rapidity. And my plea to all of you is to indefatigably lobby your own governments and the UN in order to allow the agency to come to pass.

Why is it of such importance? For exactly the issues with which this speech is consumed. If we'd had a women's agency in place, issues of sexual violence would have been front and centre rather than being eclipsed by every other consideration. Why should we have to rely on a hastily-assembled UN Action group in the Congo, whose voice is rarely if ever heard, when we could have an agency whose province it is constantly to raise the alarm on rape?

Admittedly, people will ask, rightly; Why should we expect so much more from a women's agency, given what we know of all the other agencies? There is a compelling answer to that: women's groups around the world have been working since time immemorial to keep women's issues alive; there is a tremendously powerful civil society corps of women on whom we can draw to staff the women's agency. There will of course be Machiavellian manipulation to keep civil society women out of the key jobs by those presently in the UN system: we must make sure that the machinations fail. We're not seeking unemployment for anyone, but we are seeking a redistribution of labour.

There's everything at stake here. Not only would a women's agency transform the lives of women worldwide, but it would also transform the United Nations. Remember, the UN, in the large majority, is a big club of individual men – men who can, like me, be changed under the tutelage of women.

We have to change the culture of the organization. So many futile attempts have been made, employing all of the management gobbledygook that pours out of the business school aristocracy. It never works. The one thing that hasn't been tried, and that just might save the UN, is gender equality ... having women at the levers of power. Don't give me any skeptical eyebrows: a majority of men have been pulling those levers forever, and look where we are.

Finally, I must invoke Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton and Susan Rice, the UN Ambassador-Designate. I'm not succumbing to some quixotic, momentary episode of romanticism; I'm being as hard-headed as possible. After eight miserable years, we finally have strong and progressive instincts in the White House ... we have to assume that they're on our side; that President Obama will care about sexual violence; that Hillary Clinton will take it to the Security Council; that Ambassador Rice will support a women's agency.

It is a time of hope for all of us. But out there in the visceral, real world, in the hospitals and graveyards of the Congo, in the torture and terror Guantánamos of Zimbabwe, in the refugee camps spread throughout the world, women are hurting, women are bleeding, women are terrified.

But they are also immeasurably strong. We have no right to let them down.

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