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February 20, 2008

Remarks at Hunter College

New York, NY

February 20th, 2008

HRC: It's great to be home!

[Schumer intro]

HRC: Wow. Thank you so much. It is great to be here with all of you and it is wonderful to be here with my friend and colleague, our great Senator Chuck Schumer who knows a few things about wining elections.

I want to thank all of the hosts who have made this event possible and so successful. I want to thank Maya Days. I want to thank Hunter College and particularly President Raab. And I want to thank my friends, all the elected officials who Senator Schumer has recognized; our labor leaders, our civic leaders, and mostly all of you for being here with me this morning. This is a great opportunity for me to say thank you. Thank you to the people of New York. Thank you so much for everything you have done.

I want to congratulate Senator Obama on his victories yesterday. He's had a good couple of weeks and he's run a good race. We will be squaring off in primaries in two weeks. We're going to draw the contrasts and make the comparisons and give the people of Ohio and Texas and other states a real choice.

Campaigns are not supposed to be easy. They're supposed to be hard. They're supposed to be challenging. There isn't any more important campaign than the campaign for the presidency of the United States because it is the toughest job in the world. I'm asking the people of America to hire me for a job that requires an enormous amount of effort and determination and resolve.

It is about the future of our country so I am looking forward to traveling throughout the states that are upcoming to make my case because, obviously, I believe that this is the most important election in a very long time. We've got to be focused on what kind of choice we actually have before us.

I don't need to tell this audience or anyone in New York for that matter that we've had seven years of drift and detour from America's destiny. We have had failed policies, wrongheaded approaches to every issue you can imagine here at home and around the world, and we are paying a terrible price from Iraq to Afghanistan, from New York City to L.A. The people of this country deserve so much better than George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

Our economy is waning, not gaining. Hardworking Americans are losing their jobs, they're losing their health care, they're losing their homes. So much of the pain and insecurity is directly related to the failure of leadership directly from the White House. We have seen, time and time again, how President Bush and the Republicans have undermined the greatness of America, have disregarded our values, put our Constitution in cold storage, come back and ruled with fear and fatalism – that is not America at our best. We're going to once again demonstrate who we are, what we stand for and take back our future.

But it is time to get real – to get real about how we actually win this election and get real about the challenges facing America. It's time that we moved from good words to good work, from sound bites to sound solutions.

Americans have a choice to make in this election and that choice matters. It's about picking a president who relies not just on words but on work, on hard work, to get America back to work, to get America working again for all of our people. We need to make a choice between speeches and solutions, because while words matter greatly, the best words aren't enough unless you match them with action.

This is becoming more apparent every day. My good friend Congresswoman Stephanie Tubbs Jones from Ohio represented me on one of the TV programs in the last day or two— some of you may have seen her. And she was on against someone representing my opponent and for the first time, actually, the host, asked the representative of my opponent to name one accomplishment.

That is all we're asking. We're asking to compare our records. We're asking to compare our years of service. We're asking to compare our ideas, our solutions.

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Because it's not just about my opponent and myself, this election is about you. It's about what you can expect, what your dreams will be, what your futures hold. Right now too many people are struggling, working the day shift and the night shift, trying to get by without health insurance, just one paycheck away from actually losing their homes. They cannot afford four more years of a president who just doesn't see or hear them. They need a president ready on Day One to be the Commander in Chief of the United States military.

I will be that candidate and I will be that president.

This is the choice we make. One of us is ready to be Commander in Chief in a dangerous world. Everyday around the world, situations arise that present new threats and new opportunities –situations like the change of leadership in Cuba and the elections in Pakistan. I've served on Senate Armed Services Committee; I've represented you and our country in more than 80 countries around the world. I've worked with leaders. I've stood up to the Chinese government on women's rights and human rights.

I am ready to end this war, end the era of cowboy diplomacy and restore our leadership and moral authority in the world without delays and without on the job training.

One of us has a plan to provide health care for every single American with no one left out, no excuses, no exceptions. I believe health care is a moral right, not a privilege and I will not rest until every American has access to quality, affordable health care, and I cannot wait until I can work with the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, our own Charlie Rangel.

My opponent leaves out at least 15 million Americans. The question is who would you leave out? Would you leave out the man who called me from Northern New York who had an insurance policy that wouldn't pay for the operation his son needs. Or the woman who called me from Long Island who couldn't get bone marrow transplant for her daughter? Or the mom who said, what am I going to do with my son who has congenital heart problems and we don't have insurance? I don't want to leave anyone out. I am not running for president to put band-aids on our problems, I'm looking to solve them once and for all.

[Crowd Chants: Hillary, Hillary, Hillary!]

On issue after issue there are real differences. One of us has a plan to address the growing foreclosure crisis, the other doesn't. One has a plan to revive our economy right now with millions of new clean energy jobs. And one of us has actually taken on the special interests for years and years, standing against them, fighting against them, making progress against them. Finally, one of us has faced serious Republican opposition in the past and one of us is really to do it again. Of course, the contrast with our likely Republican opponent couldn't be more stark. Senator McCain is willing to, as Chuck said; continue the war in Iraq for a hundred years. I will start bringing our troops home within sixty days.

Senator McCain admits he doesn't understand much about the economy. I have a plan to turn our economy around and create five million new jobs. Senator McCain wants more of the same. I will deliver 21st century solutions so that we can get off this track towards nowhere that George Bush and the Republicans have placed us on.

Both Senator Obama and I would make history and I am thrilled by that. I have spent my entire adult life working on behalf of civil rights and women's rights and here we are at this moment in American history.

But maybe because I understand how difficult this job will be and how lonely it is in the Oval Office because when all the cameras are gone and the lights are out, when the advisors have all had their say, the president has to decide. We need a president who is ready to do that. Only one of us is ready on Day One.

This campaign is not about a campaign, this campaign is not about a personality, this campaign is about hundreds of millions of Americans who are yearning for leadership again. People who across this country do the hard work that makes America work. I've spent most of my life helping people who are trying to make it. I know who you are. You pour coffee in the corner restaurant, you fix people's hair, you ring up the cash register, you deliver the mail, you put out fires and patrol our streets grade papers after your kids have gone to sleep.

You stand on the wall late at night defending our nation so the rest of us can sleep, you're the nurses who tend to the sick, the caregivers who care and give. You're the parents on the front lines of daily life, determined to achieve the American dream for your family. You're the foundation, the families, the communities and the country we love. You truly are the miracle that makes America what it is.

Others might be joining a movement. I'm joining you on the night shift, on the day shift and I'm asking you to join me to shift America into high gear again. To ensure that we build a strong and prosperous middle class, that we do all in our poor into prosperity and opportunity, that we recognize that the divisions among us are nothing compared to the unity that America can have.

The results that I've been part of producing for the last 35 years are rooted in my dreams for a better future. We all carry dreams in our hearts and we need to keep dreaming. Dreaming keeps us hopeful, it lifts our spirits, it sets our sights high. Without dreams you can't aspire to be great but without action, we cannot turn those dreams into reality. I want you to fulfill your dreams and I want America to fulfill ours. It will take hard work and resolve and determination but there isn't anything we can't do once we

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set our minds to it. I intend, as your president, to make sure that America does fulfill all of our dreams.

I judge the results of my public service on whether people are better off when I stop than when I started; whether our children will be able to live up to their God-given potential, whether America is making progress in moving toward that more perfect union that our founders promised. I'm ready to do this work and I'm ready to bring our country together. I know that if we once again start acting like Americans, we will see results. We will believe in ourselves. We will feel that pride that comes at the end of hard work that produces positive change.

There are big differences in this election between me and Senator Obama and between me and Senator McCain; whether we favor speeches or solutions to move our country forward, or more of the same old Republican policies. This is a debate that the voters deserve to have. We cannot achieve unity that lasts, unity that is real, unless we accept that sometimes people disagree, not just to be disagreeable or to play political games but because they have honest and principled differences. People are entitled to defend those strong opinions, but then we've got to come together to reach consensus, to honor our differences and to work through them. We won't achieve unity or fulfill our dreams by running away from honest discussion and debate.

We cannot achieve the kind of changes we want by voting present on controversial issues or by meeting behind closed doors with corporate interests to water down legislation or by caving in when the pressure mounts. The American people deserve better than that.

So yes, let's get real. Let's get real about this election. Let's get real about our future. Let's get real about what it is we can do together. Let's get real about whether or not our young people learn because teachers can teach and not just test. Let's get real about whether our brave veterans are given the care and the respect they deserve. Let's get real about not just talking family values but valuing families by strengthening the middle class, creating good jobs, proving universal health care, making college affordable, taking care of our senior citizens.

My campaign is about an America of shared opportunity, shared prosperity and shared responsibility. I do believe we are all in this together and we are going to demonstrate loudly and clearly that our country is worth fighting for; our country is worth standing up for. And this campaign goes on and this campaign moves forward. And this campaign, with your help, will take our country back. Thank you all and God bless you.

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