# Speech to 1979 Statewide Women's Conference, "hele on... women together"

CONGRESSMAN DANIEL K. AKAKA
SPEECH TO 1979 STATEWIDE WOMEN'S
CONFERENCE, "HELE ON...WOMEN TOGETHER"
JUNE 30, 1979

ALOHA...

I am quite honored that you asked me to share this hour with you. The 1979 Statewide Women's Conference does a commendable job of bringing together women of varied ethnic, educational and occupational backgrounds to share their knowledge and skills. "Hele on...Women Together" affords an excellent opportunity for both personal growth and progress for our State of Hawaii.

The role of women in society is changing all over the world, and even though the women's movement is highly visible in our own country, and especially in Hawaii, we can find its counterpart occurring in other, less advanced nations.

There is a bedrock of tradition which has shifted slowly, but most certainly, to place women on an equal plane with men. With this shift, however, comes the major fault lines which run through all the critical areas of human activity. These repercussions can be felt all over the world. Women are taking leadership roles in education, health, legal structures, employment, politics, communications and family life.

But the pace of change will be faster in some areas than in others. In legislation, where equality can be mandated, women have made considerable progress. But this progress seems a bit less spectacular when it comes down to enforcing this equality.

Many women may hesitate to break with tradition before the real promise of change is finally realized. Some will make decisions, at tremendous personal cost, and will become confused and bitter when told that the compromise need not have been made. And, at times, both men and women who stand to benefit most directly from the change in women's roles, find themselves bewildered by the scope of that change.

In the areas of education and health care, such changes will require financial commitments and administrative resources which have just begun to become available. Progress can indeed be slow when money and power are at stake.

Almost 56 per cent of all American women over the age of 16 are gainfully employed. This figure represents 48 per cent of the total national work force, yet working women earn only 58 cents for every dollar earned by working men. This inequity results in part from the fact that women are still denied entry into some of the higher paying professional, technical, and managerial positions.

Unfortunately, the lack of adequate statistical data had made it difficult for government officials and planners on the state and local level to implement new programs designed to meet the dynamic needs of working women. To remedy this situation, I introduced a resolution earlier this year which will require the Executive Branch to improve and expand collection, analysis and publication of labor force characteristics relating to working women. This measure is needed to promote better administration of existing equal opportunity and equal pay laws and will ensure

proper planning for women employed in Federal programs.

I firmly believe that changes made in economic and social life around the world in this century will be in direct proportion to the significant changes in the roles of women.

In our discussion today, we could focus on any of a number of changes, such as increased opportunities, revision of out moded legal codes or even the more traditional male-female stereotypes. But today...let me choose one area in which I am involved on a daily basis and one in which I know many of you are also working. That is...the progress of women in politics.

Women in politics. For many people, this conjures up the image of the "serious, wise and gray-haired matron." And others will claim that politics is still traditionally a "man's world." Let me dispel both of these myths.

However, even in 1979, discrimination against women as political personalities continues. Yet this discrimination is being challenged around the world in every forum, from the village council to the United Nations.

In some countries, most notably sweden, China and Somalia, the national priority is to integrate women into the economic, social and political life of the country. Still, less than one half of one per cent of the world's female population in eight countries are excluded from political processes that are clearly open to men.

As late as 1945, only 31 countries allowed women to vote. Today, women have that right in more than 125 nations. But no woman must be satisfied until all women have that right.

Even though this 99.5 per cent are entitled to participate in the political process, the numbers of women in public office still remain low. In very few countries do women fill even 10 per cent of the political offices.

The question we must address today is why so few women seek public office? What is ironic is that women are the majority. You have a powerful potential for political clout. Flex those political muscles and strive to make inroads into politics on every level.

In our country...there are currently 17 women in Congress. Of that number, 16 hold seats in the House of Representatives with one woman in the Senate. And on the state level, the Governors of Connecticut and Washington are women. And let us not forget our own Lieutenant Governor Jean King.

Social scientists have indicated that from thier research, the reasons that women shy away from politics are complex. Most relate to attitudes on both the part of men and women. Are politics "too dirty," "too demanding" or "too unfeminine." I think not.

What are the qualities needed for a person to seek public office? Again, the qualities should be the same, but ironically and realistically they are not.

As you know, women must devote more time to actual "politicking" than men. Also, research has shown that women with previous political experience have a better chance when seeking higher office. A profile of today's woman in politics, and especially those in the House of Representatives, would reveal that females

consistently rank higher on the liberal than conservative side. They may also hold more unconventional views and have a pronounced sense of adventure.

In many circumstances, women come to Congress to fill vacancies created by the deaths of their husbands. And once in office, name recognition will help a member of Congress, and that is male or female, to become reelected.

In my role as your representative to Congress, I have colleagues on several committees who happen to be women. And on the floor of the House, if the Speaker recognizes the "gentle-woman" or "gentle lady" from Maryland or New York, he is not making the assumption that they are any less capable than her male colleagues. He is merely using a form of rhetoric which has survived as long as we have been a nation.

For those of you interested in a career in politics, I would advise you to:

1. Get as much political experience as possible;
2. Be aware of all issues, local, state and national; and
3. Above all, know the interests of the people you represent.

The notion of equality of opportunity will remain an unobtainable goal for a majority of Americans unless substantial changes are made in cultural and role expectations. You can make those changes.

Mahalo.

SPEECH-NEWS MEDIA EVALUATION

Date: June 30, 1979 Location: Hawaii Women's Conference Kalani High School

Time: 11:15-12:15 Station: _____

| BEHAVIOR: | DEGREE DEMONSTRATED: None | Partially | Completely |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1-Central ideas presented clearly. | ____ | x | ____ |
| 2-Spoke with sufficient volume and articulation to be understood by all receivers. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 3-Completed message within reasonable time limit. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 4-Maintained eye contact and used notes as an aid and not a crutch. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 5-Non-verbal behavior reinforced the message. | ____ | x | ____ |
| 6-Evoked a feeling in audience that each was being spoken to individually. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 7-Gained and maintained attention. | ____ | x | ____ |
| 8-Used materials and method of presentation appropriate to audience. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 9-Clearly established a high level of credibility. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 10-Demonstrated ability to support claims. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 11-Presented materials indicating identification and understanding of the problem. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 12-Presented evidence that is current, adequate, and credible. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 13-Majority of arguments conformed to sound logic. | ____ | ____ | x |
| 14-Accomplished a significant degree of cognitive and/or behavior change as defined by specific goal, i.e., did he change their minds? | ____ | x | ____ |

USE REVERSE SIDE FOR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS.

Val: It was a big disappointment. The coordinators had expected about 40 persons to be present for the discussion; actually only about eight persons were there throughout the hour, with the maximum figure swelling to a whole dozen at one point. It was a complete waste of his time, insofar as he wasn't able to reach a lot of women through this one speech.

He didn't present his speech because it was an informal discussion group. Participants asked questions and he answered. He has to learn to give more concise answers. For example, he can state his position, then go into the reasons for his stand. Often times he gives a long rambling lecture on the status of the bill without going into his position on the measure. It points to his reluctance to take strong stands immediately upon someone asking his opinion. For example:

Constituent: Congressman, what is your opinion on the creation of a new Department of Education?

DKA: Well, the President and many members of Congress feel that the creation of a Cabinet-level Department of Education will be a major step in helping coordinate the hundreds of federal education programs now scattered throughout the federal sector . . . .

AS OPPOSED TO:

DKA: I support the creation of a Cabinet-level Department of Education. My reasons are . . . .

KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

He should give his position first, then explain the reasons for his stand. Now, he's explaining the entire situation, then going into his reasons for supporting it. He should reverse his order.

Other than that, I think he scored a few points, mainly because he is a very likable guy and shows his sincerity in person-to-person contact. The discussion group was very small; he was able to talk to each person as an individual. A strong point.

END.

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