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Draft Two (WELLSLEY)

REMARKS FOR MRS. BUSH: WELLESLEY COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT
SEVERANCE GREEN
WELLESLEY, MASSACHUSETTS
FRIDAY, JUNE 1, 1990

Thank you, President Keohane, and good morning to you all.

At last. I finally get a chance to prove I'm more than just
a pretty face. \\\

There's a famous line here at Wellesley, a kind of informal motto, that graduates are supposed to invoke when faced with a tough challenge. And I'm going to use it the next time I'm nervous about a speech. The motto is:

"I know I can do this. I did it at Wellesley." \\\

But I am thrilled to be with you here, and thrilled that Raisa Gorbachev was able to join us. Before we left, Mikhail told me personally that he foresees a new era of peace and harmony. I told him that I was also confident of continued warm relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. He said: "Yes -- but I was referring to you and Wellesley!" \\\

I did try to get the President to come. I told George I might as well face up to the fact that I was invited here only because of the popularity and prominence of the sweet soul who shares my bedroom at the White House. He said: "They invited you to Wellesley because of Millie?!" \\\

Walking through this tree-lined campus, I was reminded of my first visit to Wellesley, more than 10 years ago, when I was invited here to talk about my experiences in China. I was struck both by the spirit of the place and by the natural beauty of the

campus -- certainly among the world's most picturesque.

But Wellesley is not just a place but an idea -- an experiment in excellence -- a continuing experiment in which diversity is not only tolerated -- but embraced. It's a tradition that reminds me of my return last year to one of your sister colleges, and the student body president's incredibly moving speech about tolerance. She told a story by Robert Fulghum, about a children's game called "Giants, Wizards, and Dwarfs."

It's a large-scale version of "Rock, Paper, and Scissors." Fulghum instructed the children: "You have to decide now, which you are -- a giant, a wizard, or a dwarf!" But then a small girl tugged on his pants leg and asked: "But where do the mermaids stand?" "You see," she said, "I am a mermaid."

That little girl knew what she was, and was not about to give up on either her identity or the game. She intended to take her place, wherever mermaids fit into the scheme of things.

Where do the mermaids stand -- and all those who are different, those who do not fit the standard boxes and pigeonholes? "Answer that question," says Fulghum, "and you can build a school, a nation, or a whole world on it."

As that very wise young woman said last year, "diversity" -- like everything worth having -- requires effort. Effort by everyone to learn about and respect difference, to be compassionate with one another, to cherish our own personal dignity and identity -- and to unconditionally accept the same in all others.

I say this proudly, as a salute to Wellesley's multi-

cultural tradition -- and no, not even slightly, as a critique of the recent, very healthy debate. The discussion on this campus has been far-ranging, passionate -- and most of all -- genuine. It's been a testament to Wellesley and the unique value of women's colleges, which, after all, represent the very embodiment of diversity and choice.

Still, I know I wasn't your first choice as speaker. But I'm used to that. I was second lady for eight years! \\\

Your first choice was Alice Walker, known for The Color Purple. Instead you got me -- known for the color of my hair!

Of course, Alice Walker's book has a special resonance here. At Wellesley, each class is known by a special color -- and for four years the Class of '90 has worn the color purple. And at Wellesley, as in the book, the color purple means different things to different people. Purple can be the color of glory -- reserved for royalty and kings. And purple can be the color of pain ... the red-blue blush of a childhood bruise.

For four years, all 600 have worn the color purple. But today you meet on Severance Green to say goodbye to all that ... to begin a new and very personal journey ... a continuing search to find your own true colors.

In the world that awaits beyond the arches of Waban Lake, no one can say what your true colors will be. But this I know: You are young and gifted and well-educated. You have a first-class education from a first-class school. And so you need not, probably cannot, live a "paint-by-numbers" life. Decisions are

not irrevocable. Choices do come back. And it is within the power of every Wellesley graduate to make her true colors "brilliant to the point of scandal, fierce beyond belief."

And as you set off from Wellesley, I also hope that many of you will consider three special opportunities.

The first is to believe in something larger than yourself, to get involved in some of the big ideas of your time.

The second is the opportunity to have fun. When you entered Wellesley four years ago, the summer's favorite movie was about America's most admired philosopher-truant -- Ferris Buehler's Day Off. \\ "Life moves pretty fast," says Ferris. "Ya don't stop and look around once in a while, ya gonna miss it." \\

And the third opportunity is the most fun of all: The opportunity to be a successful parent. During these past four years, you have had impressed upon you the importance to your career of dedication and hard work. I hope that, in making that point, another has not been neglected.

As important as your obligations as a student or future doctor or lawyer or business leader may be -- you are a human being first. A husband or a wife first. A father or a mother first. A son or a daughter first. A friend first.

How sad it would be to fail at one of these positions, whatever your success in your career! Relationships are the most important investment you can make.

At the end of your life, you will never regret not having passed one more test, won one more verdict, closed one more deal.

You may regret not having spent more time with a husband or wife, a son or daughter, a parent or a friend. In the final analysis, a busy career cannot compare with their companionship and love.

In leaving you with this message, let me be especially clear about one thing. I no longer believe ... that you have to be married ... or have children ... in order to be happy. But if you do -- if you do make that choice -- then you have a responsibility. You cannot put individual career triumphs over shared family joys. Who we are matters more than what we have. And that goes not only for a woman -- but also for a man. \\\

Recently my son Marvin told me he couldn't come to some event, that he had to, quote, "babysit for the kids." I told him: "Marvin -- when they're your own children -- it's not called "babysitting!" \\\

We are in a transitional era right now ... strange and fascinating and exhilarating times ... learning how to adjust. Maybe it should be faster. Maybe it should be slower. But whatever the era, whatever your times, one thing has never changed. Fathers and mothers -- if you do have children -- they must come first. \\\ Because your success as a family -- and our success as a people -- depends not on what happens inside the White House -- but what happens inside your house.

For over 50 years, it was said that the winner of Wellesley's annual hoop race would be the first to get married. Now they say the winner will be the first to become a CEO. Both are the stereotypes of their eras. Both show too little tolerance

for those who want to know where the mermaids stand. And that's why both are wrong. And so I offer for you today a new legend: That the winner of the race will be the first to realize not society's dream -- but her dream -- her own personal dream.

And who knows? Somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President's spouse. I wish him well. \\\

The controversy ends here. But our conversation is only beginning. And so as you leave Wellesley today, take with you my deep thanks for the courtesy and honor you have shared with Raisa Gorbachev and me, not just a graduation -- but a graduation with the Class of 1990. May your future be worthy of your dreams. Thank you. God bless you. And God bless the United States of America.

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