You and Me Both with Hillary Clinton: Difficult Conversations (with Sarah Stewart Holland and Linda Thomas-Greenfield)

HRC I'm Hillary Clinton and this is *You and Me Both*. I know you may not want to hear this, but Thanksgiving is just around the corner. And with it comes lots of cooking, lots of eating. And at least in some households, lots of warnings about what topics we can't bring up with guests around the dinner table. You know, now more than ever, disagreements over everything from climate change to what books kids could read to, you know, just name it. Everything seems to derail what should be, you know, pleasant, festive gatherings. So what are we supposed to do? Talk about the weather all night. Fortunately, there are people out there who are highly skilled at navigating difficult conversations. And today, we're going to hear from two of them. Later, I'll be speaking with United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who's been doing the incredibly delicate work of diplomacy for decades. But first, I'm talking to a mom of three kids from Paducah, Kentucky, who co-hosts a podcast that's all about tackling divisive topics.

HRC Sarah Stewart Holland started the *Pantsuit Politics* podcast with Beth Silvers back in 2015. When they began, Sarah was a self-described progressive Democrat and Beth was a registered Republican. Now, together, they've waded through the last two presidential elections, the COVID pandemic, various culture wars. Sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing, but always bringing honesty and empathy to the conversation. They've also written two books. The first, which has become a book club standard, is called *I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening): A Guide to Grace-Filled Political Conversation*. They followed that one up with *Now What?: How to Move Forward When We're Divided (About Basically Everything)*. I happen to know Sarah because she was an intern on my first presidential campaign, and I'm delighted to be speaking with her again. So welcome to the show, Sarah.

Sarah Stewart Holland Thank you for having me.

HRC We know each other because you interned on my 2008 campaign for president. Then you went on to work for a United States senator, but then you left Washington, D.C., for your hometown in Kentucky. I've been to your hometown. You and I have seen each other there in Paducah, Kentucky. First, what led you to move back there? And secondly, can you describe Paducah for people who've never been there, have no idea where it is?

Sarah Stewart Holland Well, first of all, everybody should come visit. It's a fabulous place. Paducah sits on the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi River. And so we you know, I can be in Illinois, I can be in Missouri, I can be in Tennessee at any moment. And Paducah is a very interesting place. So I know, you know, some of this history, we had a gaseous diffusion plant built in the fifties and sixties that really changed our community. It brought in a lot of workers to build the plant, and then it brought in a lot of higher educated people to run the plant. And, you know, they sort of demanded these parts of the town that didn't exist before. Like we have a symphony. This tiny little town in Kentucky has a symphony. And those factors really, I think, changed the fabric of the town over time. The the plant has now been closed down. It's ,as you know, it's a long, decades long process to close down something like that. And in the nineties, I think because of some of those those affinities from the plant were closing, they had this artist's relocation program where they

would offer artists from around the country a chance to move to Paducah and buy a house for a dollar. And people said, yes, I would like to do that. So we had this influx of artists. We have a big quilt festival that happens every year, and they really changed the town. I think that was seen as like a transactional thing. And there was not this anticipation that you invite an artists' community into your town, and in the same way the plant changed the town, they changed the town. And so we are in a very red state. But Paducah proper, the city itself is pretty blue.

HRC Mm hmm.

Sarah Stewart Holland And, you know, when I moved back, I think your book, *It Takes a Village*, was way ahead of its time. I really feel like it's having its moment now. But that's what I wanted. I wanted a village. I wanted to have children, and I wanted to feel that support. I grew up with great grandparents and grandparents and, you know, church community just wrapping its arm around me and rooting for me-

HRC Right.

Sarah Stewart Holland -my whole childhood. And I wanted that for my children. And so, my hu- I was like, *You want to move back to Paducah?* And he was like, *I don't know if I do*. And I was like, *Well, I'm gonna go, so I hope you join me*. And he did. He did. I moved back six months pregnant.

HRC Was he also from Paducah?

Sarah Stewart Holland No, he's from Atlanta.

HRC Okay.

Sarah Stewart Holland And so I, we moved back in 2009 when I was six months pregnant with my first son, Griffin.

HRC Wow. Well, you're an eighth generation Kentuckian, but you're also a progressive Democrat. And as you say, you're living in Paducah, which as we have seen all across the country, more urban areas are often blue in a much larger suburban, exurban rural region that is red. And so you differ politically from, you know, a lot of your, you know, fellow community members, even members of your own family. You've talked about, you know, the fact that your father is a Trump voter and how have you navigated your political differences with somebody that you really love. Has anything changed in your views or his?

Sarah Stewart Holland It's been a long journey. You know, I think the zenith of our difficulty was definitely the 2016 election. like, you lived that too-.

HRC Oh I did.

Sarah Stewart Holland Obviously. (Laughs) Um-

HRC Yup, I remember that.

Sarah Stewart Holland Yeah, I'm sure. And I think it was a lot of people's experience, right? I mean, at one point he tried to unfriend me on Facebook and I said, we're not--we're not going to do that. We're not going to do that. We're going to stay in relationship with each other. And that's what we talk about on the podcast. And, you know, that's what we work through with our listeners. Like this is a long game. We are trying to influence each other, not shame or in one conversation, debate each other into agreement because it never works like that. I tried it for so long. For 20 years I tried like sending the Atlantic Longread and the policy paper and being like, *See, this is how it should be* and thinking that's what was going to convince people. With my my dad, you know, my dad is loving and supportive and he was thrilled that I was coming on this podcast to talk to you. Like it's just, you know, he thinks--I think he is so proud of me, which, which fuels that connection and keeps the trust and keeps us focusing back in on each other because politics is not the entirety of our relationship.

HRC Exactly. And it shouldn't be the entirety of anybody's relationship. But of course, that requires either both individuals or both groups of people to do what you and Beth advocate, which is spend time with people that you don't agree with, try to develop trust between you, find other ways of relating. But it's hard.

Sarah Stewart Holland It is hard. And, you know, we--we get listeners and people in our community and you can hear like, *Just--can you just tell me the math equation for when it actually is okay to unfriend my uncle on Facebook*? Like if he comments this thing and he says this word, is it okay for me to cut him off? Right? And and we always say, like, we can't give you that. You know, we wrote *I Think You're Wrong (But I'm Listening)*. And I joke like people would go, *okay, but I listened and I still think they're wrong. Now what do I do*? And so our other book now, what is when we really try to say, okay, but what are we talking at? What relationship are we talking about? Are we talking about a stranger you're fighting with on Facebook? Are we talking about your dad? Are we talking about your coworker? Because all that different context of connection really matters and we don't want it to, we want like the overarching thing to fuel the whole conversation and we'll just debate it. And obviously this is what's wrong or you're wrong. It just can't be like that if we want to work on each other, that's what we're doing. We're not trying to change each other. We're just trying to work on each other. And I have. I--my dad has worked on me and I have worked on him. One of my, like, most intense moments in the pandemic is when he decided to get vaccinated, which he was vehemently opposed to. But it wasn't just me. The circumstances of his life were working on him, right? But he knew I was there to say this is the right thing. Like when he when he made that call for himself, he knew he could call me. And I would say, “I'm so glad you're doing this.”

HRC Right. We're taking a quick break. Stay with us. [ad break] What do you think that people on both sides of this divide get wrong about the other, you know, people whose experiences are more like yours and mine? What do we get wrong about people like your dad and so many others who are good, decent, honorable people? I'm putting aside the malicious ones.

Sarah Stewart Holland The bad actors, right?

HRC The bad actors. And what do those folks get wrong about people like us?

Sarah Stewart Holland We all know the stereotypes, that Democrats are elitist and overly intellectual and judgmental and don't really care. And then the- I always say, on our podcast, we all just sort of default to, You don't care if the other side dies. Like, that's like the- that's where we go immediately. You don't care if I die, I don't care if you die, like that's how we know we've gone off the cliff is because suddenly we're all psychopaths. And so we- you know, we do that with each other. And I, living where I live, cannot do that. Like, back to the 2016 election, there was a woman in my child's daycare, and she loved my baby. Just, it brings tears to my eyes. She loved my baby. You know who else she loved? Donald Trump, just loved him so much. I could not decide what she was and put all that characterization, that two dimensionality, that we do on her. It was impossible to me because I was handing my child to her, into her loving arms two days a week. Right. I couldn't do it. And I think that's what happens when you live in a place where where everyone's politics are not closely aligned with your politics.

HRC Right.

Sarah Stewart Holland 'Cause you just don't have that luxury of saying, Everybody fills this box, you know? In 2016, I was on the ballot, too. I ran for my city commissioner race. And I won! It was a very, very bittersweet night, that election night. And I thought, I know there are people who voted Republican and then went down the ticket and voted for me knowing my politics.

HRC Because they knew you.

Sarah Stewart Holland They knew me.

HRC They understood where you were coming from.

Sarah Stewart Holland Yes. Yes.

HRC You know what, what you just said reminded me of one of the interviews that my daughter Chelsea and I did for our Apple TV Plus program, *Gutsy*. We interviewed a African-American woman firefighter in the Fire Department of New York. There aren't very many of them and there sure aren't very many who are African-American. And we just absolutely adored her because she was funny and smart and very, you know, clear about why she was doing what she did and how she was trying to break down barriers for other women to come behind her. And she said to me one time, she said, "You know, I've been in the FDNY for now--I think, as I recall--like 15, 16 years. And I've moved up the ranks and I'm in firehouses where I'm the only woman and often usually the only Black person. And, you know, I hear things and I see things. But I'll tell you one thing. If I or anybody else was ever in trouble, these guys would break down the door to save me or anybody."

Sarah Stewart Holland Anybody.

HRC And so part of this is trying to hang on to the understanding that, yes, we have different political views, but we are all human beings and we've got to make sure that

doesn't get marginalized. And that's what you try to do in your podcast. You know, for our listeners who may have family members, friends, coworkers who they disagree with politically or have had a disruption in their relationship because of politics. What are some of your tips? What are some of the ways that you can try to restore some grace to your relationships and conversations?

Sarah Stewart Holland Well, you know, Beth Silvers, this is a Beth Silvers original. She always says, "just remember, you do not have to leave the Thanksgiving table with draft legislation." Like, let's just lower the expectations for these conversations. Like, no one's looking for that from you and your coworkers or your family members. Right? So there's a lot of phrases that we've used that, you know, I think really just help to keep in your pocket. And this is another Beth original where she'll say, "Can you tell me more about that?" When you're just in it, and you're like, Have we stepped into another planet? What's happening? Because that's a question we get a lot. This all sounds lovely. What if we can't agree on reality?

HRC Mm hmm.

Sarah Stewart Holland What do we do then? Right. And what we always say is, "Just say that." Say, *isn't it interesting that you and I grew up in the same home, and we can't even agree on this basic reality?*

HRC Right.

Sarah Stewart Holland Isn't that interesting? Not, that makes you bad and me good. Isn't that – because it is interesting! If you're a student of human nature, that is interesting, right?

HRC Yes it is. How did that happen?

Sarah Stewart Holland How did that happen?

HRC What are the reasons?

Sarah Stewart Holland Right.

HRC You know, one of the biggest issues caught up in political debate is, of course, abortion. And this is such a difficult hot button issue for most people. So how do you talk about that in, you know, conversations with neighbors, people in your community, people at church?

Sarah Stewart Holland What I have learned from my time in Paducah. And honestly, the story I really always tell people is when I knocked on doors, I knocked on 5000 doors, in the election of 2016 which was just an exercise in humanity. A lovely one. I had such little negative interactions.

HRC It's a great experience, isn't it?

Sarah Stewart Holland It really is. You know what I always tell people? It is the building blocks of mental health. You are outside, you are moving your body. You're engaging with humans.

HRC Exactly.

Sarah Stewart Holland But everybody thinks it's so scary. But I'm like, it's not. But obviously, I was a nonpartisan race in theory. In reality, in 2016, everybody wanted to know who I was voting for. And I would say, well, I worked for Hillary Clinton. And that wasn't- It just diffused it. Because what are they going to say? No, you didn't. [HRC laughs.] Right? No you didn't? Like, yes, I did. So that experience, and that's absolutely my experience with talking about abortion. So often when I get in conversations about abortion, I either talk about my time working for Planned Parenthood, or I talk about my own pregnancy loss, where I had a pregnancy at 20 weeks where the fetus didn't have a heartbeat.

HRC Oh.

Sarah Stewart Holland And I wrote a post actually before- right before the election in Kentucky where we defeated an abortion amendment, and I said, like, if this you know, this was not that long ago, but if it had happened now, I don't think I would have been able to get the surgery I got. I would have had to get sick first, you know, and it, to say- and I think women have gotten so open and transparent because of the work of generations of people, including yourself, making this conversation more open, making this conversation more transparent. And there's- there's so many women standing up and saying, *this is what happened to me. You can't argue with this. This is what happened to me. Would you want this to happen to you?*

HRC That is so well said. You know, I can tell what you're going to answer to this question, but I'm going to ask it because I feel it's important for people who, like so many right now, are confused, unsettled, angry, worried, all of those emotions. But based on your experience day to day in your community, do you feel optimistic about the future of our country?

Sarah Stewart Holland You know I do.

HRC I know but I want everybody else to know you do!

Sarah Stewart Holland Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. You know, I. I feel like this is a conversation I have with my thirteen year old all the time. You know, I jokingly say when I got pregnant, I said, no, Alex P. Keatons allowed. I did not expect to become the Alex P. Keaton. That is what happened. He went further left of me and he gets so, you know, in that way that you do when you're young. It feels like this is all terrible. Like, how is any of this going to get better? We were just having this conversation about climate change and I said, Hey, we just passed a once-in-a-generation climate change legislation. That matters. And I know we don't feel it instantaneously and that this work is long. But I, you know, I believe in the beloved community. I believe that I drink from a well, that I did not dig and that people on the other end in front of me will hopefully benefit from things that I'm doing that I don't get to experience and that connect- that, it's back to what we were talking about from the beginning. That connection, I believe in that. I feel it every day. I have seen it play out in

the lives of others, including you and I. I just try to tap that as much as I can to be present with people and not try to talk them out of what they're feeling. You can't talk a thirteen year old out of how they're feeling, I don't know if you've tried. It is not a worthwhile endeavor. And so I just say, *hey I understand*. I felt that way at times too. *But I'm here with you and I'll stay with you. And we're on the same team*. And I feel that way about humanity for the most part. And we will keep taking steps together and we don't know where it's going to go, but I do believe that we'll keep moving forward.

HRC Well, amen. Amen. You and I are on the same page about that. And I am thrilled to have this chance to talk with you.

Sarah Stewart Holland And you are welcome on *Pantsuit Politics* any time.

HRC You know what? Let's add that to the list. I'd love to.

Sarah Stewart Holland I love it.

HRC Listen to the *Pantsuit Politics* podcast wherever you get your podcasts. If you think talking to your uncle or your next door neighbor is challenging, wait until you hear from my next guest. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield has represented the interests of the United States in some pretty difficult places, from Liberia to Afghanistan. And, as we'll hear about now, in her seat on the Security Council of the United Nations as our ambassador to the U.N. Over the course of her 35 year career with the Foreign Service, Linda has served as Ambassador to Liberia, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Director General of the Foreign Service and Director of Human Resources and held posts abroad in Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria and Switzerland, to name a few. I know how difficult diplomatic work is the delicate balancing of knowing when to listen and learn and when to push back. And I've seen Linda in action, and she does it masterfully. She has great stories to share from her experience on the high wire of international diplomacy. But she also offers us all an example for how to handle difficult interactions in our own daily lives. I'm so delighted she could join us on the podcast. Welcome, Linda.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be here with you.

HRC Well, I've been looking forward to this. And I want to start by talking about your work at the United Nations, because I know that maybe some of our listeners don't know, what does the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations do on a daily basis?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know, first and foremost, I represent America to the world. At the United Nations, there are 193 country member states there. And I have to engage with all of those member states, because when it comes to voting in the General Assembly, it's one country, one vote. And so I spend a lot of my days engaging with every single country. But also I attend meetings of the General Assembly and meetings of the Security Council. And then I do things like what I'm doing with you today.

HRC Well, I know how important it is to have that one on one personal contact, building those relationships between you representing the United States and the representatives of other countries. Because, as you say, oftentimes we need votes. We need votes to do things

that we believe are in our interests in furtherance of our values and obviously protecting our security. So let's take a step back. You were born and raised in Baker, Louisiana, north of Baton Rouge. How did you end up in the Foreign Service as a diplomat representing our country? Was there somebody who inspired you or something you learned that made you interested in international relations?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know, every time I'm asked that question, I recall something different and new that I didn't recall before. And most recently, I've talked about the fact that when I was in eighth grade, Peace Corps came to my community. There was an old HBCU, Leland College, and it closed down, and Peace Corps came there in the mid sixties to train volunteers who were going to Somalia and Swaziland. And that was my first engagement with the world outside of Baker, Louisiana. They reached out to the community as a poor rural community and invited young kids from the community to come over and learn the languages that they were learning. And I started to learn Siswati.

HRC Wow.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield When I was in eighth grade. I can't repeat a word of it now, but it was interesting to me. And then fast forward, I ended up going to the University of Wisconsin Graduate School, and one of my graduate classmates was a Siswati teacher, Glory Memba. And so I kind of rekindled that interest. I'd gone to Madison to get a master's degree in public administration. I didn't have any interest in international relations, but that moment rekindled that interest in learning more about the world. And I ended up in the Ph.D. program studying African politics and got the amazing opportunity to go to Liberia, where I met people who worked at the embassy. One of them happens to be my husband. And that's all she wrote. I took the Foreign Service exam, and here I am 40 years later.

HRC You joined in 1982. You started representing the United States, and you've had one of the most interesting, impactful careers that I personally know of. But when I was Secretary of State, you served as Director General of the Foreign Service, which is a very prestigious post within the State Department. And you also served as the Director of Human Resources. So you had a lot to do in stewarding the global workforce of 70,000 personnel. In your view, what makes a good diplomat?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know, first and foremost, you have to love what you're doing. And the most important skill is the ability to listen to people. It's communication skills. So we teach people they have to write well, and that's important. We teach people to develop contacts. But in developing those contacts, they have to develop relationships. Right? And if you develop those relationships, you can be a good diplomat no matter where you are assigned, because you develop the relationships that help you to understand where other people are coming from, even those people you might not agree with.

HRC I was wondering if there's also either teaching or role modeling about what to do when you're asked to execute a policy you don't agree with personally because, you know, you serve different presidents. Obviously, you know, there's different policies depending upon who's sitting in the Oval Office. How does a diplomat come to be professionally able to say, okay, I disagree with this, but I serve the, you know, president and the country?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know, it takes experience and it also takes a commitment to the profession. I had an experience early in my career when I questioned whether I wanted to be in the Foreign Service and whether I could continue to serve given a particular policy and it related to Liberia. I was in Liberia in the late seventies. I left Liberia in '79 after some very violent rights riots, and in 1980 there was a bloody coup and the person who carried out that coup committed atrocities beyond our imaginations at that time. And I joined the Foreign Service in '82 and one of the first meetings, I think maybe in '83 that I was aware of the White House having, was a meeting between President Reagan and Liberian President Doe who'd carried out this horrific and very bloody coup. And I thought it was wrong for the president to meet with this guy. And I voiced it to a more senior officer. And he said, Linda, if you quit today, nobody will pay attention. If you want to make a difference, you have to be in a position where your voice is heard. And right now your voice will not be heard. And I will tell you later in my career, I was in a position where my voice made a difference in our policies. And I was able to effect change. And I very much appreciate the advice that I was given at an early age that just quitting will make me feel good, but it will do nothing for our government. So that's advice that I give to young people today.

HRC I think that's such important insight and advice because, you know, our conversation today is really focusing on, how do you talk to people you disagree with. And I think it's fair to say you and I have a lot of, you know, a lot of time chalked up to trying to do that. But if you don't listen to people with whom you disagree, there is absolutely no chance of finding any sliver of common ground. You still may not find it, but you've got to start from some point of understanding what does this person, what does this government want, and is there any way to reach some kind of better outcome? We'll be right back. [break]

HRC I want to talk to you about two areas that you really have fascinating experience in, one in Liberia. Tell the listeners a little bit more about when you went back and it was still a very violent, conflict-ridden country.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know, I went full circle. I started in Liberia in '78, '79, and then went back to Liberia in 2008 as the ambassador. And Liberia had just come out of a horrific era of civil war. In 2006, it had elected the first woman president. And it was extraordinarily challenging for her and for the entire country. And I remember going in, the Secretary of State at that time was Condi Rice. And as you know, you give us a secretary's letter of instruction to go into a country. And my letter of instruction to Liberia, it said a lot of things, but one thing stood out: your job is to help this country to succeed.

HRC Mm hmm.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield And so that was the approach that I took when I arrived at my embassy. I shared the letter of instructions with the entire embassy and said, “This is what we're here to do.” We're here to help this country, then, through decades of civil war and conflict, people are traumatized. We have a president who started out with a budget of $60 million to run a country. It's pocket change for most countries. How do we help her to succeed? And my approach to her, and I'm still friends with her, is, “Madam President, I'm going to be the one person who will always tell you the truth.”

HRC Yes. Right.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield *Even when it, it's not something you want to hear. You can trust that I will always tell you the truth about the people around you. About you*. But I also engage with everybody in the country, the good guys and the bad guys. I spoke to everyone. I went into communities. I spoke to market women. I spoke to unemployed teachers. I got to know the country from the grassroots so that I could be in a position to help the country succeed, inform our own policies about what we needed to do from the Washington side, but also advise the president and her government on what they needed to do. And I found that to be extraordinarily effective. One thing that happened the first year I was there, the local newspapers vote on the Diplomat of the Year, and I was voted the Diplomat of the Year but called the People's Ambassador. And that was extraordinarily important to me because people recognized that they would see me in the markets. They would see me in the coffee and tea shops talking to unemployed youth. They would see me in rural areas talking to local people, farmers and getting a sense of what the country needed to survive and help the country to succeed. And I think we did an extraordinarily good job. And two of my successes, Madam Secretary, was to get you to come to Liberia twice.

HRC I know. And as I was listening to you, Linda, I thought about going to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's second inaugural after she'd gotten herself reelected, which was equally amazing. And she asked me to speak to the parliament, remember that?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield I see.

HRC And she told me, she said, now I need you to go speak to the parliament, but you're going to be standing in front of an audience that includes war criminals, coup plotters [laughs], all kinds of, you know, very dangerous and difficult people.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield And my job was to keep you from taking a picture with any of them.

HRC Yeah [laughs], I know it. I know it. But that's like a perfect story. Like, okay, you had been spending your time day in and day out talking to everybody, including, you know, people that maybe we would not choose to, but that was part of the mission. And then I was speaking to a full audience that included some of those same people. But it just goes to remind us that you don't make peace or progress just with your friends. I mean, you've got to have a big enough tent that you bring all kinds of people of influence in a society together. And one of the most fascinating parts of your career, Linda, is you were among the very first Americans ever to meet with and negotiate with the Taliban. And that happened, you know, not in the last couple of years, but back in the nineties. Could you just describe the circumstances, you were in Pakistan, what happened that made you cross the border to meet with the Taliban?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield So I was the refugee coordinator in Pakistan and the refugees in Pakistan all came from Afghanistan. And when I was sent out there, I was sent to basically close the refugee camps and start supporting people returning home. I got there in August of 1996 and the Taliban came in in November, and that changed my job

description. So I was engaging with the Taliban on the issues of women's education, on issues of human rights, on issues of the poppy and drug trade. It was not my intention. I literally was going in to assess the work of the NGOs and the UN, the work that they were doing in Afghanistan, because we were the largest funder. So my initial goal was to work with those organizations, but those organizations were having difficulty working with, with the Taliban. And I recalled in one meeting with the Taliban minister of health, who'd made a decision that women could not work in hospitals, they could not provide medical care and blocked any access of women to medical assistance. And I went in to meet with this guy. I had a very lightly covered veil on. And as I started to talk to him, he said, "You are trying to impose your culture on me, on us." And I said, "This is not my culture."

HRC Pointing to your head with the head scarf.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield Pointing to my head with the veil. And I removed the veil. I said, "I wore it out of respect for you. But this is not my culture." And all the NGOs were like up in arms because I'd removed my scarf. But I said, "I need to understand your culture. So if I understand correctly, when women get sick, the only outcome is that they die."

HRC Mm hmm.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield *So if your mother, your sister, your wife, your daughter all get sick, they have no access to a doctor because they can't see a male doctor. And you're blocking them from seeing a female doctor.* And he sat there. He didn't say anything. And finally the meeting ended. Everybody was upset with me because they thought I'd been a little pushy, a little overaggressive. And I discovered that his mother was seriously ill and he'd been pushing for one of the NGOs to fly his mother to Pakistan for medical treatment. And he thought that I knew that. And the next day he made the decision to allow women to go back to work. It was not- I mean, we rejoiced at that decision, but they also had to have a male relative accompany them. And the male relative could be their two-year-old son.

HRC Right.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield But women were allowed to go back into the hospital to work. And I thought, you know, I engaged him. I didn't think I was being aggressive. I was like, *I need to understand your culture*.

HRC Good for you, Linda.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield And I engaged regularly with Afghan women, and one of the things the women told me, which really impacted me is you're pushing for our girls' education and we want our girls to be educated. But you have to educate our boys, too, because if you don't educate our boys, they're going to be forced to marry ignorant men. And it changed my approach as well. Because I began to understand, yes, we have to demand that girls be educated, but we cannot ignore the education of boys because otherwise these boys will become Taliban who don't understand how to support the rights of women.

HRC I think that's such an important story because so many people in our country today don't want to talk to anybody they disagree with, whether it's the right, the left, red, blue, Democrat, Republican, whatever it might be. Yeah, I mean, that that is diplomacy kind of in a nutshell. And yet it often seems to move so slowly. It takes a lot of patience. How do you keep the resilience? You know, I have a little bit of experience of getting knocked down, having things not work out. And you do have to call on something deep inside. And I know that in your career you've had to do that time and time again because you've been in some very challenging positions. So talk a little bit about what it takes to keep talking and working under difficult circumstances as you have.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know, you always have to approach any of these discussions with an unrealistic degree of hope.

HRC Hmm. Interesting.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield That you are making a difference and that even when you fail you achieve something. And so I approach situations that are clearly very challenging, very difficult, that I probably know in my heart of hearts that I'm not going to win on, but something is going to come out that will make a difference. Will make a difference in the lives of people who, who are engaged or people who just need to see the U.S. there. They want to see us at the table. And when they see us at the table, it gives them strength. So it's also about giving others the strength to engage on these issues. And I just know every single day -- and this is that unrealistic part of me -- every single day I know that something I'm doing, although it may look like failure to everybody else, is making a difference to someone somewhere.

HRC I like that because I think that is a way that people like you and I do keep going is that somehow this ripple effect is going to, you know, mean something.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield Yes.

HRC And before we close, do you have any reflections about how some of what you've learned through your 40 years of diplomacy could be applied in our own country, which seems so divided, so at odds with each other, where people are more interested in scoring points than solving problems? Do you have any advice you want to give our listeners and others who are trying to figure out how do we get back together? How do we have hope that we're going to work our way through all of these controversies and problems?

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield You know what I see and what has worked for me and what I see not working now is people have lost their sense of compassion. They've lost their sense of kindness. They have lost their sense of respect for other people's differences. So I can sit with someone that I have differences with and listen to them long enough to find a common thread. And sometimes it takes a lot of patience to do that. It's sitting and listening to somebody spout off something for two hours that you totally disagree with. But suddenly a light goes off and there's this thread and you find a connection with that person. And so we've lost our sense of patience.

HRC Yes.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield As well. So my advice is, listen, respect. Show kindness and look for the commonalities that are there, that if you didn't have the patience to wait, you wouldn't find those commonalities. It may be that you have grandchildren who are the same ages and you spend fifteen minutes of very valuable time talking about your two grandkids.

HRC Mm hmm.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield And then I can use that. Bring it back around to say, if you want a future for your grandchild, then you need to rethink what you're doing here.

HRC Mm hmm.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield And so it does take patience, because you go into these meetings, you got 30 minutes. Lucky if you got 60 minutes and you got three pages of talking points and everybody's waiting for you to go through each point because ten different entities within the government want you to make their point.

HRC Yeah, that's right.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield And so you have to go through the talking points, but you also have to listen and you have to connect with the person. So I always start my meetings connecting. And so then you've established that relationship that allows you to reach back to that person again and again and again. And that's when you know you've succeeded as a diplomat, when you have those relationships that work, even when you disagree with each other.

HRC Boy, amen to that, Linda. Well, you could give a masterclass on diplomacy and you have given us a lot to think about in this conversation. And I'm just so appreciative of your taking your time, but more than that, of your steadfast, stellar devotion to the work you've done on behalf of the United States. And I just hope your words resonate with our listeners and beyond so that people will talk about that.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield Well, I'm not going to let you end with that because you have been such a role model for all of us. And during your term as Secretary of State, you really gave us the guidance and the support that we needed that allowed us to to do our jobs. And you gave us the example that we needed. So I'm going to thank you for what you have done as well.

HRC Well, thank you so much for everything. It means the world to me.

Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield Thank you.

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