

# Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton?

*This panel looks at Hillary Clinton's run for U.S. Senator from New York. Mulling her prospects of moving from behind-the-scenes operator to elected official are three well-informed political journalists:*

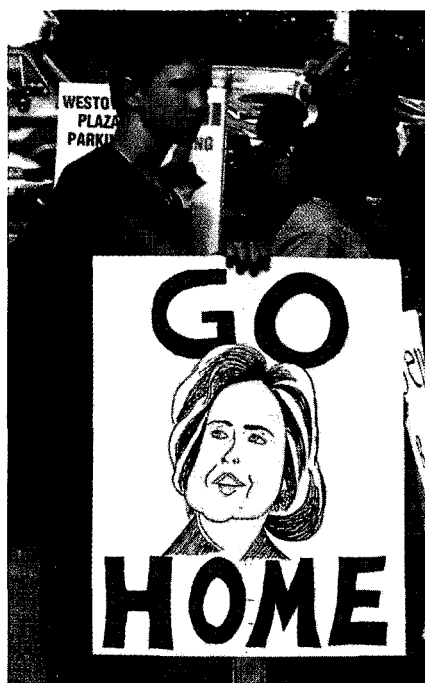
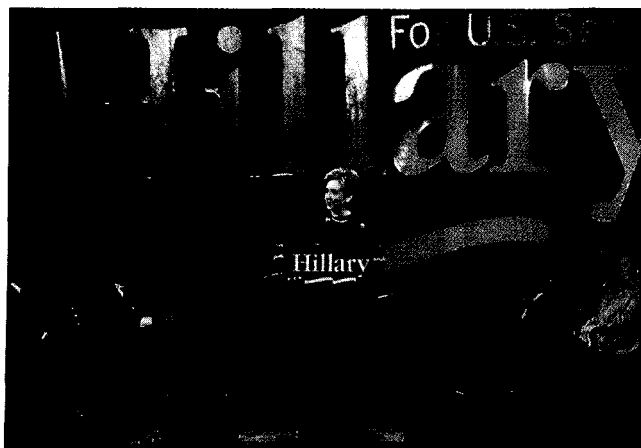
- **John Fund**, a member of the editorial board of the Wall Street Journal, who has watched this race closely from his New York City base

- **Jodie Allen**, a senior writer for U.S. News and World Report

- **Andrea Peyser**, a native New Yorker who is covering Mrs. Clinton's campaign for the New York Post.

**JOHN FUND:** Hillary Clinton campaigns for the Senate with both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, she has all of the trappings of power. When her Air Force jet lands in small towns in New York State, it's obviously the biggest event of that day. She carries attention and security and press with her everywhere she goes because of the unusual nature of a First Lady running for office.

On the other hand, 50 percent of New Yorkers still are troubled, either greatly or somewhat, by her outsider status: She's a carpetbagger with no direct connection to New York. Even Robert F. Kennedy, who is always cited as her antecedent, was born in New



York and grew up as a child in New York City. There's never been someone with this national visibility parachuting into a Senate race to represent a significant state like New York.

The good news for Mrs. Clinton is that she is turning into a more effective candidate. I traipsed around with her on one of her suburban forays recently, and she has made a remarkable transformation. She can abandon the role of First Lady upon demand and turn into a small-town panderer worried about everything from local power plants to sewage connections. She does a very good job of listening and nodding and being concerned.

She is mostly issuing bland, feel-good policy pronouncements, but this is helping disarm her opponents, and she is turning into an effective candidate. She's had some rocky moments, but will, by the time the debates roll around, be far more poised and confident.

She is going to attack her opponents on campaign financing. Already Common Cause and a group called Democracy 21 have filed formal complaints, ostensibly against both Republican and Democratic campaigns, about the use of soft money. I say "ostensibly" because I find it interesting that Democracy 21's chairman is a labor lawyer named Ted Kheel, who was a major figure in the 1996 Teamsters/Democratic National Committee scandal. He was one of the bagmen transferring cash back and forth between Mr. Carey and the DNC. I find this a rather unusual person to head up a campaign finance reform effort, though obviously he is an expert on the subject.

Another advantage Mrs. Clinton may have is turnout. Turnout is the single most important factor in this race. New York City's population has basically held constant while that of the Upstate counties has increased slightly, and that of the suburban counties has increased significantly in the last 25 years.

In a typical election in New York State, the city only casts about 28 percent of the vote. In other words, more than seven out of ten votes in New York State are cast outside of the city, about half in the suburbs and the outer suburbs, and the rest in upstate counties, including the cities of Syracuse, Rochester, Albany, and Buffalo.

In the 1998 D'Amato-Schumer race, which Al D'Amato ended up losing by 10 points, there was a tremendously successful attempt to galvanize turnout in the minority communities. This took New York City's share of the vote up to about 33 percent, which is very high by modern standards, and that contributed to Schumer's landslide.

The key to this year's election is going to be the share of New York City's vote in the overall mix. If it's 28 percent, Mrs. Clinton may not win. If it's 33 percent, she can and probably will win. When Mayor Giuliani was the likely GOP candidate, he stirred up a great deal of animus in the black community, but now that will largely be absent with Rick Lazio as the GOP's candidate. The Reverend Al Sharpton admitted to me that it's going to be very difficult to have his organizers work overtime to urge voters to take out their feelings on Republican candidates.

One reason high minority turnout is important to Mrs. Clinton is because she's not looking especially impressive in other demographic categories. When Rudy Giuliani was in the race she polled only even or just slightly ahead among Jewish

voters, though they are heavily Democratic. She loses very, very badly in the suburbs against a Republican candidate. Upstate she is still largely an unknown quantity.

Eventually Mrs. Clinton is going to have to hold formal news conferences. Right now, if you want to ask the First Lady a question you have to hope she'll take a couple on the fly after a carefully arranged town hall meeting. In this Senate race she has never submitted to the rigors of a full-dress, no-limits news conference. When she does, there are lots of subjects that will eventually come up, including the Brigadoon billing records that magically appeared in the White House after two years. The \$100,000 commodities futures profit that she managed to score by, she says, reading the *Wall Street Journal* very closely. The Castle Grande project she said she didn't work on, but it turned out she did. The firing of Billy Dale and other civil servants in Travelgate.

There will be a report from Independent Counsel Ray on that over the summer, which of course will leak and be formally released before the election. The First Lady will not be in legal jeopardy on that, but I expect the report will indicate that when it comes to things like Mrs. Clinton's contention she didn't know the travel office employees were going to be fired and did not participate in the act, she has engaged in what one might call an "alternate conceptualization of reality."

To date, the New York press corps has been very gentle on Mrs. Clinton, not tough or terrible as they like to claim. The press will leap on any mistake either candidate makes, but nothing much deeper. I expect Mrs. Clinton is going to get a pass on almost all of the Clinton scandals, partly because she's going to avoid formal news conferences.

In all of her recorded public life, she has only once sat down and taken all questions offered, and that was the famous "Lady in Pink" news conference about Whitewater. In retrospect, even her defenders will admit that many of her statements in that news conference were, shall we say, inoperative.

Mrs. Clinton is still a celebrity candidate. She is not yet a substantive candidate in the sense that people are convinced she shares New Yorkers' concerns and would be most effective in handling their issues in the Senate. She also faces money challenges. She has raised more than \$12 million already, and there will be a mountain of money spent on her behalf by sympathetic liberal groups. But the Republicans have also found it very easy to raise money against her. And they will pour this into ads in the fall.

Then there is the role of the minor parties in New York State. There is an Independence Party, which is a leftover from Ross Perot's movement. It has ballot status, and Bill Clinton has taken its leader, wealthy businessman Tom Golisano, out for several golf outings to try to butter him up. Mr. Golisano is a lot like Perot and has a reputation for being mercurial. But he apparently has thrown in his lot with Rick Lazio. (Many in the In-

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—JOHN FUND

dependence Party resented Hillary's highhanded attitude when she applied for their endorsement.)

The Liberal Party nomination was headed to Giuliani—who has stuffed his administration with the sons, daughters, and friends of New York Liberal Party chairman Ray Harding—until he dropped out. Now it is likely to be Hillary's. But the Liberal Party is vastly smaller than the Conservative Party in New York State. The Conservatives consistently draw a quarter-million votes, and no Republican has won statewide office in New York since 1974 without also having the Conservative line on the ballot. Unlike Giuliani, Rick Lazio should get that line easily.

The debates will be important and extremely well watched in this race, drawing a national audience for one of the first times ever in a Senate race. A lot of money and effort is going to be expended for the benefit of the relatively small pool of voters who don't already have an opinion on whether Hillary Rodham Clinton should be New York's next senator. These will be some of the most sought-after and influential people in American politics this year.

**JODIE ALLEN:** Let me offer a positive picture of Hillary Clinton as a U.S. Senator. She will, first and foremost, be disciplined and diligent, well-informed and well-prepared. She asks smart questions of her staff and the people who consult with her. Even before her recent "listening tour" of New York State, she knew how to listen.

But she also knows how to talk. She is an accomplished public speaker with sometimes uncanny poise. Right after the Monica Lewinsky scandal hit the headlines in January 1998, when most of us in her shoes would have been hiding under a bed, I saw her address a packed auditorium of international movers-and-shakers gathered at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. She spoke for about 40 minutes without notes and without pause, and she wowed 'em.

And Mrs. Clinton—remarkably in this town of flacks and flunkies—does a lot of her own research; so she usually knows what she's talking about, even if you don't agree with her. Her staff chuckles about her famous cardboard box, into which she dumps articles, briefing papers, and research summaries that catch her interest, which she drags out at meetings. If it's dairy farms she needs to talk about, she'll know the price of every cow and the cost and distribution of every milk subsidy.

As a senator, she will be religious in impulse. Her religiousness has been firm since her youth, and contrary to the '60s stereotype, she was no hippie—she never dabbled in drugs or took to the streets to bring down the system.

She will be most concerned about "kitchen table" issues—especially children both at home and around the world. Mrs. Clinton is, of course, a mother herself, and her own daughter is by all accounts and appearances a poised, sensible, and hard-working student.

Mrs. Clinton was an early proponent of the notion that

a child may, under certain extreme circumstances, have rights and interests that trump those of his parents. This idea was once dubbed radical. But as *Washington Post* columnist Richard Cohen has pointed out, it seems to have acquired a far broader—and more conservative—constituency in the current arguments over the fate of one Elián González.

She will be a persuasive politician. All her experience on the campaign trail—not just for herself but earlier for other candidates—seems to demonstrate that the more people see her the more they like her.

This may come as a surprise, but as a Senator I think she will be willing to compromise. Mrs. Clinton has been trained in compromise ever since she first arrived in Arkansas and discovered that her plain-Jane, eyeglassed image didn't play well with the Razorbacks. So she got blonded and contact-lensed, and now if there is any concern about her appearance among her detractors it's that she's too photogenic.

Sure, her health care plan was over-engineered and over-bearing. But since then, she's learned to be a good tactician. Since the health-care debacle she has worked through intermediaries—on Capitol Hill, in the nonprofit and corporate sectors—in many quiet policy pushes. She knows when to keep her head down and live to fight another day. Her acquiescence in welfare reform is a good case in point.

Mrs. Clinton will draw attention—not just to herself, but to the important business of policymaking. She will be devoted to her job.

My goodness. Who could possibly want an elected representative like that?

**ANDREA PEYSER:** At her campaign kickoff, Mrs. Clinton announced she would call herself Hillary. Just Hillary, period. No Clinton. She's divorced herself from that.

So now we in New York are on a first-name basis with this celebrated woman who would represent our state, a place where she's never lived, in the Senate, a body with which she has no experience, running on a record that is largely derivative of her husband, from whom she is separated, if not officially then in fact.

I disagree with the idea that the more we in New York see of Hillary Clinton, the more we like her. What's really surprising instead—given Hillary's celebrity status, press advantage, and Democratic base in a liberal state—is that Mrs. Clinton is doing as badly as she is. Most of all, why isn't she running better among voters she really ought to own?

Look at two groups that you would think are her natural constituencies: women and Jews. As a woman and a Jew and a Democrat myself, I have some ideas about why these groups are not embracing her in the way one would expect.

Jews usually vote 70, 80, 90 percent Democrat in New York races. No Democratic candidate has ever won a statewide race without at least two-thirds of the Jewish vote. Yet in recent Zogby polls, the best Hillary has done was to poll 57 percent among Jews.

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The way things look now, those numbers probably aren't going to get much higher.

Meanwhile, Hillary puts herself forward as a lifelong champion of women. Yet Zogby polls showed her barely splitting female voters with Rudy Giuliani when he was her opponent. This is very surprising. Mrs. Clinton is quite popular among African-American women. But among white women she is in real trouble; she's actually losing.

When a Buffalo radio commentator asked her in January why so many people "foam at the mouth at the idea of her in the Senate," Hillary was ready. She responded that some people don't like a woman taking strong positions. Then she added very flippily, "and perhaps they don't like my hairstyle." In April she continued in this vein, telling an upstate audience that women candidates in New York face greater burdens than men.

Here is a person who was deeply involved in most of the Clinton scandals, and ruthless in her role in several of them. And yet she has the convenient ability to present herself as a woman and wife who is a picked-on victim. Then she moves out of that character into being a political hardball player again. As a woman, I find this offensive. If you are going to go for the job, you should be willing to take the lumps. Yet whenever she is confronted with her participation in some unsuccessful political venture she fades into the "I'm being taken advantage of" mode.

This seems very out of character for Hillary, a lifelong feminist who's always preaching the fierceness and power of women. And it's not just off-the-cuff rhetoric. I don't think anything Hillary says is off-the-cuff; she's a very, very controlled candidate. Hillary is using this women-are-victims strategy to connect with working women, women who face sexism that Hillary can only imagine. And perhaps this strategy is working, because her numbers have improved among women recently. But then maybe not.

There's another aspect to this that cannot be ignored. Why, as that radio host in Buffalo pointed out, do so many people have a visceral dislike of Hillary Clinton? What are we so afraid of? As a reporter, I speak to a lot of people in New York. Some will vote for Mrs. Clinton, some won't, but I can't remember a single person who was enthusiastically happy with Hillary Clinton, who really liked her.

The most enthusiastic audiences I have seen were in an African-American church in Brooklyn and among teachers' unions. She can wow those audiences. But her enthusiastic audiences are always hand-picked. After the Brooklyn appearance I walked out into the neighborhood and talked to lots of people who weren't allowed in because they weren't reliable.

Not long ago I spoke with two women, one an at-home mom in Brooklyn, the other an editor at a publishing house in Manhattan. This was not long after the Patrick Dorismond shooting, and each one of these women was really mad with the way Rudy Giuliani handled the death.

So I asked them, "Are you going to vote for Hillary?" And

they responded, "Hell, no." Then each woman, and they couldn't have been more different, engaged in a several-minute diatribe as to why she couldn't stand Hillary Clinton, somebody neither of them has met.

They were mad at Rudy for screwing up, but they were madder at him for the boost they felt he was giving Hillary. Though Giuliani is now out of the picture, this illustrates how many people are eager to vote for any candidate who seems to have a chance of blocking her.

I haven't seen this pronounced a visceral reaction to a candidate in a political race before. I've come to the conclusion that one thing New Yorkers don't like about Mrs. Clinton is that she strikes them as a phony. It isn't the phony Yankees cap. It isn't just her flip-flops on Puerto Rican terrorists, Palestinian statehood, and so forth. The deeper problem is that we in New York don't really know who she is, or what she wants. We don't trust her.

As we mull why she decided to grace us with her presence and run for office, we ask: Why here? Why now? Why does this woman feel she can do a better job than anyone else in representing a state that, clearly, from all her mistakes, she does not understand? She has never given us a good reason to trust her—just platitudes about health care and caring about people. I've never heard her say this is exactly what I'm going to do, this is why I'm better than the other guy.

What I *have* heard Hillary Clinton say, in feeling as much as in words, is that she feels on some level that she is owed this Senate seat, that it is payback for putting her career on hold when she married Bill Clinton, and for the humiliation she suffered during his impeachment trial. Being a victim made Hillary very popular during impeachment. Her approval ratings were high when she looked downcast. But that's not a good reason to put somebody in the Senate.

Besides, I'm not sure New Yorkers believe she's really this poor victim of her husband. We see a woman who was complicit in the White House scandals, a shrewd player in the administration, and very much part of his efforts to cover up his messes.

Finally, many New Yorkers sense that Hillary is not able to think on her feet. It can take her days to make a statement about events, and we get the impression that pollsters are running her campaign, that her policies blow with the wind.

Unless she can give us more coherent reasons as to why New York would be better off with Hillary in the Senate, I suspect many New Yorkers will be more than happy to go on with their lives without the celebrity in our midst.

### Discussion and Questions

**FUND:** My take on "why now" is very simple. It is much easier to raise money and attract public attention as a First Lady than as a former First Lady in the year 2004 back in your home state of Illinois. This is her moment to capitalize on her secondhand power.

Look at how Bill Clinton, her campaign manager, has been bending the entire weight of the federal government toward her.

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—ANDREA PEYSER

In January, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Andrew Cuomo, on a very dubious pretext, snatched control of all of New York's homeless programs away from Mayor Giuliani and put them under federal supervision. That announcement was first made public by Mr. Cuomo's wife at a Democratic Party Christmas dinner, which is a rather unusual way to announce government policy. When she announced it to the assembled Democratic nabobs, she said, "And this is just another example of how we are going to put this mayor into his proper place."

If Giuliani had remained Mrs. Clinton's opponent, strategists close to the Clinton campaign tell me there is a good chance the New York City Police Department would have been taken over by the Justice Department in the fall. Probably the Clintons would have tried to avoid being too obvious. Maybe the President would have had Justice issue a scathing report, and then stepped forward, biting his lower lip, to say, "This is all so very sad. Under normal circumstances, the failed oversight by

Mayor Giuliani would demand federal remedial action be taken. But I don't want to politicize this brutal situation, so I'll refrain." If you don't think he's capable of that, you ain't seen nothing yet.

Keep in mind that Miami has a murder rate of civilians by police ten times that of New York. Philadelphia has a rate four or five times higher. A total of only 11 persons were shot and killed by New York City police in 1999, which is the lowest number on record and significantly below the rate of 28 people per year under previous New York Mayor David Dinkins (who was black) and his fellow Democrat Mayor Ed Koch. But these are immaterial facts. Hillary Clinton is running not just a New York campaign but a national crusade, and if ripping up the New York City police force had been judged necessary as a way of taking down Rudy Giuliani, then the entire weight of the federal government would have been brought to bear.

Now that it's a different Republican in the rifle sights, the pressure will be applied in other places. But there could easily be an October surprise or two in this campaign, bearing an originating address of "Washington, D.C."

**QUESTION:** If Gail Sheehy's recent work is to be believed, the prime mover of the President's bombing campaign in Kosovo and Serbia was the First Lady. What effect on our foreign policy would Senator Clinton have?

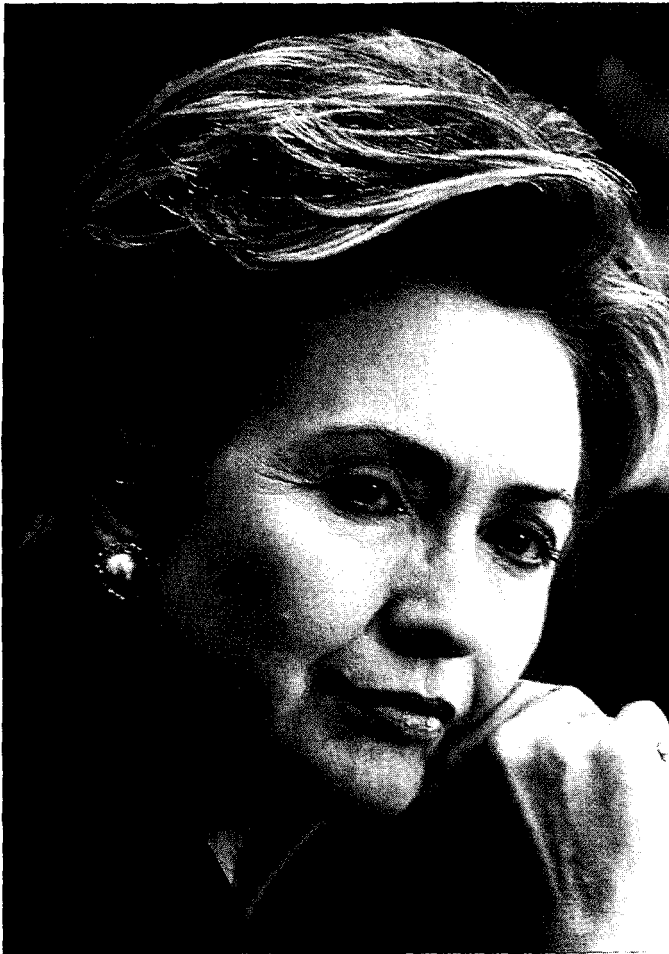
**FUND:** I think she'd be an interventionist. I think she'd find things to bomb all around the world.

**ALLEN:** She certainly is a human rights activist. There's no question about that. But she would be torn, as many Democrats are, between their impulse to solve every problem for every beleaguered group, and their general dislike of the military. Those inclinations would be competing. I suspect she'd probably, in the end, be more pacifistic.

**FUND:** Certainly towards Cuba.



# Hillary Rodham Clinton *as* Feminist Heroine



*Hillary Clinton has obviously become a female icon, of a very controversial sort. Our final panel considers what type of example she sets for women. Participants include:*

- **Christina Hoff Sommers**, Brady Fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and author of *Who Stole Feminism?*
- **Karen Burstein**, former New York state senator, New York Family Court Judge, New York City Auditor General, and chair of the State Consumer Protection Board under Mario Cuomo
- **Phyllis Schlafly**, author of 16 books, columnist and radio commentator, and president of Eagle Forum
- **Laura Ingraham**, MSNBC host and author of the book *The Hillary Trap: Looking for Power in All the Wrong Places*
- **Betty Friedan**, author of *The Feminine Mystique*
- **Lynne Cheney**, former head of the National Endowment for the Humanities and senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

**CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS:** A few years ago, I attended a feminist conference in New York City that included a session entitled "Anger and Struggle." The moderator, literature professor Jane Marcus, introduced herself as "an expert on anger." She urged the assembled women to "use your rage in your writing!" The other panelists were a Harvard University instructor described as "angry and struggling"; Catharine Stimpson, until recently director of the MacArthur Fellows program, introduced as "enraged and engaged"; and Brenda Silver of Dartmouth ("angry since 1972"). Each speaker recited a tale of outrage, and warnings of male backlash to come.

I believe Hillary Rodham Clinton would have been very much at home at that "anger and struggle" gathering. Why do I believe that, and why is that worrisome?

Feminists can be roughly divided into two camps: equity feminists and gender feminists. Equity feminists want fair treatment for women and no discrimination. From the point of view of equity feminists (and I count myself among them) most of the major battles in the U.S. have been won. Women are not merely doing as well as men in this society, in many ways they are now doing *better*.

But gender feminists are not celebrating. Gender feminists see women as a subordinate class, routinely tyrannized and victimized by men. Many live in a chronically offended state.

Why do I count the First Lady with the gender feminists? After all, she never speaks these days as a professed feminist. She is a careful politician; so you will not hear her mention "patriarchal hegemony" or the "gender system." But you will find her practicing what the gender feminists preach. Like other gender feminists, she constantly exaggerates women's victim status and