

ONE MORE TIME

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Good morning everyone. Thank you so much for coming and thank you all to the sponsors and the Essex County Commission for putting this very important subject, social justice for women, front and center. Is everyone excited to be here today? So I'm going to launch into what I have to tell you.

I have a question for you. You don't have to answer, just think about it... because I'm going to answer for you. What is the key thing that makes the difference between success or failure? It is that you get up one time more than you are knocked down. If you do not meet your goal the first four times in a row, the first five times in a row, or the first six times in a row, the only thing you must do is get up one more time than you are knocked down. The only failure is quitting. Because those are the wise words from my mother who said, "Pain is only temporary, but quitting is forever".

And what does *one more time* have to do with gender equity? It has everything to do with gender equity because as women have been fighting for their equality for three centuries in our country, they have had to get up *one more time* than they were pushed back, knocked down, and told to sit down, and be quiet. It took sixty years, that's sixty years just from the time that women actually got together and started to fight for their right to vote. Six zero. Not six years, sixty years. And they got knocked down more times than I want to count. But what did they do? They dusted themselves off, and they got up *one more time*. And that is our charge as women, as advocates, and as women leaders in the community. Because we will get exasperated, we will get frustrated, we will get angry- and yes, we are allowed to get angry, and we are allowed to show we get angry- because when men get angry they are seen to be tough and in charge, and go-getters. But you know what happens when women get angry. We get called just one thing. And to that I say keep going *one more time* and let them call you whatever they want to call you because it doesn't matter what they have to say, it matters what you have to do.

And what do you have to do? Get up... *one more time*.

Now my background, my story is the perfect example because I started my law practice when I was 26 years old. And as a woman in the Bar in Massachusetts, which has a long history of having that "old boys' club" and often being one of the few women in the room, still—and I graduated law school in 1996 – that's not back in the dinosaur age. But still, still...women are breaking barriers. And what did I have to do? I had to network, I had to go to meetings, I had to be everywhere. If you want to succeed in any of your professions or your jobs, you have to be everywhere. And it is tiring. I'm not going to lie to you. It's work! It's a lot of tedious and time-consuming work. And that's what people don't tell you. When they make it everybody pretends, "Oh, it was so easy. I just climbed the ladder and you can do it too. You just have to be perfect all the time and everything will work out for you". I'm not going to feed you a line of propaganda. I'm going to tell you it is hard work. But it is worth it. Because sometimes I did not want to go to that network meeting, or to go to that breakfast before going to court, or go to that lunch after being in court, or go in to the evening reception after a long day of work. But I picked myself up and I went *one more time* because it's that one meeting or that one networking event that you don't go to, that you will miss the opportunity because it never fails. The one event I did not really want to go to, I got a great client out of it. And that is the lesson I am here today to share with you; is that you have to

keep going. Because nobody, nobody's going to give you a break. Nobody's going to pick you out of a crowd even though you are immensely talented, and immensely skilled; there are a lot of women who are just like you. And you have to stand out and be the best and keep going. And, show up *one more time* than everybody else.

And I'll say one thing for men that I've met along the way. It's going to be good. Men are our allies. We need to include them, we need to invite them. And I'm looking at this room and it's an awesome room filled with women ... and thank you to the men who also came today. But, everybody has to bring one man everywhere they go. You have to increase the numbers because we can not do it alone. So bring your men; your brothers, your fathers, your husbands, your sons. Everybody—your friends and your neighbors because we need help and we need to make our allies. And those business meetings that I went to, and those law dinners that I went to... most of the men, if you take charge and you're confident, and you stand up for yourself, they will respect you. And I got very good business from men. So we can't just rely on women. We have to have allies on both sides.

Because I've also done a lot of work with domestic violence survivors. And, the key for survivors, not victims, survivors—they always tell you that statistic that it takes a domestic violence victim five times to leave their abuser. And they always focus on those five times. But in my experience in representing women, and some men, who experienced abuse, and children, the key difference again is not the five times, it's the *one more time* that they left that situation and got themselves out and moved forward. So it doesn't matter that it took five times. It matters that *one more time* that they did, and they had the guts to move. And that is what entrepreneurs, domestic violence survivors, and leaders have in common. You can't focus on the things that didn't work out. It's not a failure if you tried. You've got to keep going, and pick yourself up....I know I'm repeating this a lot... but repetition is important. It is *one more time* that is important.

OK, in my day life, I'm an immigration attorney, right? And we want to talk a little bit about social justice at this forum. So, immigration reform: everyone is talking about it, and everyone is clamoring about it. But no one is really talking about the substance. And this immigration reform bill that is currently in the Senate, that the Senate has put forward, the so called "Gang of Eight", it might surprise some people or it might not surprise some people that I'm not really that keen on the compromise they've come up with. Because the compromise—compromise is a good thing, but capitulation is not—and what I feel this bill does is it pretty much sells out women, small businesses, individuals, and the undocumented. Because as the bill stands right now it's only about 25% of undocumented immigrants that will get a chance to become green card holders. But, the top big businesses that both Democrats and Republicans are supporting will get the lion's share of this reform. They will get access to workers, they will get access to fast tracking, and they will get access to all of the talent pool. But the small businesses won't because they're going to be priced out of it. And the individuals won't, and the American workers won't, and the women won't because there is really very little for them in this bill. And the key is, it completely disregards family immigration.

Right now if a business comes to me and they want to hire a worker, the average processing time is about two to four months. It's not bad, right? But, our government in its infinite wisdom provides a premium processing fast-track. You pay about twelve hundred dollars and you'll get a decision in two weeks if you want to bring a worker into the United States. And I do those cases and I love them, I love helping businesses find talented workers. I love it. What I don't love is that there is no same benefit

extended to U.S. citizens and their families. I had a client walk into the office. They want to sponsor their parent, they were born here, goes to school here, works here; they want to sponsor their parent from abroad. Do you know how long it takes before they can possibly bring their parent over? At least one year, maybe two. And, there's no premium processing fee that a U.S. citizen can pay to speed up the process to bring their spouse, parent, or child over to the U.S. Now I find that, as a country that says that we value family values, and that we are a nation of immigrants...why can't I, as a U.S. citizen pay money if I have it and get a faster process, just like the businesses do? And that's what nobody will talk about, it's the inherent unfairness between the business side of immigration and the family side of immigration. And that's something that hopefully down the road I may be able to have a chance to change.

The other part of immigration that no one talks about is this hostility to women, especially immigrant women seeking asylum here. Asylum is, if you are fleeing your country and fear for your life, we as the United States are supposed to welcome you. You have to apply and prove that you are in danger. But we are supposed to be that beacon of justice and protect refugees. And asylum recognizes race, religion, ethnicity, and political opinion but women don't even get their own group. Is anyone shocked? Women have to fit themselves into a sub-group, and they first have to prove that they are being targeted because they're women. They have to prove that being a woman in some countries in this world actually is dangerous. Now you only have to open the front page of the news to know that this is pretty obvious. But to the U.S. Government, first you have to prove that women are indeed subject to torture and death in other countries. Then after that you have to prove that you yourself were persecuted. But you can't even get to that because our government does not give equality to the status of being a woman. And I'll give you an example.

I had a case where I had a family of women who were fleeing sex trafficking. Thank goodness they were actually weren't trafficked, so this is great, right? They did what very few people can do. They actually got here, fleeing sex trafficking before they were actually snared into that awful underworld. And the U.N. recognizes you don't actually have to be trafficked; you can just be subject to and in danger of being trafficked. And what did the opposing counsel, who is the U.S. Government, argue? "Oh, they weren't actually victims of trafficking, therefore they should not get protection." It's like being in the 80's where women showed up at a police station and said my husband is abusing me and the officers would say "Well, you if don't have a black eye, then come to us later after you have proof of being beat up." That's pretty much where we are with asylum on women, with women today in the U.S. So, the judge in her infinite wisdom, **her** infinite wisdom, approved our case and we won! And it was wonderful. And the government could have left it at that, but guess what? They're appealing. And do you know what the conclusion of their appeal is? "Sex trafficking is just regular crime in other countries, and too bad for you, but we can't help you. Your country has to take care of it." Regular crime. This is our government. And so this is what I fight against. And we, we won. We got knocked down, but we're fighting it, *one more time*. And we will keep going until we win because I am not going to stand for the U.S. Government saying that sex trafficking is just quote, "regular crime".

So I'm going to finish up with another very important gender equity issue and that is pay equity. Yes. Do we want pay equity? Do we have it? No. So here's my experience. I have a solution actually. Everybody knows pay equity, 77 cents to the dollar that men make and all that. But, the real fight in pay equity is comparable work. And comparable work is that men do one job and women do another job. And they seem to be different, but really they're the same. There's skill, responsibility, effort, and

working conditions. Because there are still a lot of jobs that are gendered. A lot of women are nurses and a lot of men are doctors. That's starting to change. But, this case that we worked on was where cafeteria workers were all women and janitors who were all men. They both lifted heavy, fifty pound items. The men lifted buckets of detergent – fifty pounds. The women lifted fifty pounds bags of potatoes. They were both on their feet all day. They were both subject to hot and cold conditions. And it required the same level of effort, and the same level of skill. But yet the men were making about \$12 an hour, and the women were making about \$6 an hour. So the cafeteria women got together and they sued. And do you know who told them by the way, what they were making...that their pay was so different? It was actually the men that shared this. They shared the information with the women. So again, they were allies to help the women earn the money they deserved. Unfortunately, they won at first, but then they lost in the highest court. And it was up to the legislature to fix this.

All the legislature had to do was define one word- "comparable". And it was one sentence. And that bill sat there for 11 years. Nothing, in committee, dying every year. When I was on the Commission we took charge and we said, "We are going to get this bill out of committee." And that is exactly what we did. We made about 40 legislative visits. And so forty legislative visits, that's what we have to do to get movement on Beacon Hill. You have to go up there, and go up there again, and go up there again, and, if you're tired you have to go what? *One more time*. Now, it's only at its mid-point because we got it out of the House Committee. And interestingly enough, the chair of that committee was a woman. And then it went to the Senate Committee, and that chair was a man. So unfortunately in this story the man was not our ally because the bill did die there. But it doesn't mean we're stopping. But I bring up this pay equity part because this is where the next fight is going to be. Because when women lawyers are paid the same as men lawyers, and women doctors are paid the same as men doctors, that's good for them. But there's a whole other area of the economy where you still have women doing one job; and they don't get paid less because it is an easier job. They get paid less because it is women who are doing the job. And that's the next fight, and that's the frontier. Because the women, the cafeteria workers, over a lifetime they are losing, they lost \$250,000. And that is unacceptable for somebody who's working full time, just as hard as the men do. So, with that, I leave you your charge, which is to get up, and fight, and keep fighting *one more time*. Thank you very much.