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# Hillary Clinton's legacy for women

By Molly Levinson  
US political analyst

**Hillary Clinton's dashed hopes for the presidency come hand in hand with a dashed piece of history - it is not yet time for a woman to be President of the United States.**

Her dwindling effort marks not only the end of a ferocious fight for the party's nod, but also the end to a collective dream amongst many in a generation of women who have formed a large piece of Mrs Clinton's support.

Her candidacy is a reminder that the ultimate glass ceiling remains intact.

Disappointment among older women voters is palpable.

Yet women ought not to be disappointed with Clinton's legacy.



Hillary Clinton's bid may have failed but she has changed the playing field

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During the course of her candidacy she all but took gender off the table as an impediment to electability.

Just take a look at polls over the past year and a half. In December 2006, only a little more than half - 55% - of registered voters said that America was ready to elect a woman as president in a Newsweek poll.

“ **She cleared the way for other women** ”

Susan Brophy  
Political strategist and former Clinton administration official

In the wake of Mrs Clinton's candidacy, in another poll conducted by Newsweek in April, almost three-quarters of American voters - 70% - say the country is ready for a woman commander-in-chief.

"She cleared the way for other women," says Susan Brophy, a former Clinton administration official and partner at political strategy firm the Glover Park Group.

"She has made it easier for other women to run - she's been such a tough debater and such a great candidate. She will make it easier for women in the future."

**Political cocktail**

The legacy that Clinton leaves for women is strengthened by the fact that she did not just win with women.

Middle-class and blue-collar voters, white men and Hispanics aligned themselves with her as well, to produce primary wins in states like California, Arizona, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Indiana.

A carefully crafted political cocktail - made with an unyielding and more hawkish position on the war in Iraq than rival Barack Obama's, a



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trademark seriousness and lack of emotion, topped off with a fierceness and strength during what became a brutal, dogged fight for the nomination - helped her to convey an image that overcame concerns over her gender.

And yet, for many women, her gender remained an ultimate appeal.

"For older women voters, this is the first time that a woman had a real shot at the presidency - someone who had the same experiences as they did, someone who embodied their hopes and dreams and aspirations," says Anna Greenberg, pollster and Democratic political strategist.

Age often marked the dividing line between the women who supported Mrs Clinton and the women who did not.

### 'Cynical and divisive'

Her core supporters were mostly older than 50, those who fought for and cheered on the rise of feminism, women her own age.

Younger women, by contrast, were not as loyal to the potential first woman president.

Time and again, in places where Mrs Clinton needed their support - where each additional piece of support would have meant a few more delegates, like Iowa, Maryland, Missouri, and Wisconsin - young women under 50 voted for Barack Obama.

One thing is clear from their lack of support for the woman candidate: younger women do not feel the same urgency to elect women that their mothers and grandmothers do.

Take, for example, 38-year-old former producer and writer for *Sex and the City* Elisa Zuritsky.

A Clinton supporter at the beginning of the campaign, Zuritsky is now an Obama enthusiast - blaming what

“ To think that we'd vote for someone because they are a woman is too simplistic ”

Elisa Zuritsky  
Writer and Obama supporter



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she calls Clinton's "cynical and divisive behaviour" during the course of the past several months.

"To think that we'd vote for someone because they are a woman is too simplistic," she says.

"Maybe women of our generation have been spoiled by all the hard work that all the feminists did before us. But they were successful, and whatever gripes we have are fairly muted.

"[Gender] has taken a back seat and I think it has been a show of progress that we can focus on other things."

### **New politics**

Greenberg says that, as a group, the young women who have supported Mr Obama were not casting anti-Clinton votes, but rather embracing the vision he put forward.

"This is about being inspiring, forward-looking, talking about the future, and speaking in a language that appealed to them," she says.

"Clinton's deliberate attempt to talk about experience didn't appeal to them."

Mrs Clinton's legacy is hardly set in stone. Her seat in the US Senate is safe and she has years to continue her work, and to build her image as a senior legislator.

As for whether she will run for president again, those who have watched her career and worked for her over the years think it is unlikely. But speculation about a possible



No women waiting in the wings have the same aura of inevitability

Vice-Presidential slot on the Obama ticket, or even a cabinet post, continues.

There are no women waiting in the wings who have the same aura of inevitability that Mrs Clinton had before her bid.

But perhaps, given what we have learned about young women voters' eagerness to embrace a new kind of politics in the course of this campaign, that bodes well for the next woman who wants to take a shot at the White House.

It may be decades from now or it could happen in just a matter of years, but whenever it does happen, she will be better off because of Hillary Clinton.

*Molly Levinson is a political analyst and former CBS News Political Director*

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