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Women, Girls, and Public Diplomacy

Patricia Ellis: Good evening everyone and welcome. Thank you so much for joining us tonight for our special event with Tara Sonenshine, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, who will speak about women, girls, and public diplomacy. I'm Patricia Ellis, president of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, which promotes women's leadership and women's voices on key international issues. On behalf of the WFPG and our board—and our board member here, Gail Kitch—we are so pleased Tara could take time out of her very busy schedule to speak with us tonight. This is our last event of 2012. Tara is just back from a big trip—she was in Turkey and Bosnia and she has been traveling a lot. So we're so pleased that she could be with us tonight. It's a special privilege for me to have Tara here tonight since Tara is a good friend. We go way back to our days as journalists. She worked at *Nightline* when I was at *MacNeil-Lehrer*. That was a while ago, but we've forged a friendship and we have kept in touch over the years and have found many opportunities to work together in our various incarnations. This is one of them and we look forward to collaborations with her office.

So it's been a great year for the WFPG, we heard from Michelle Bachelet, Lael Brainard, Anne-Marie Slaughter, Esther Brimmer, Anne Richard, and through our Embassy Series, we have been hosted by the ambassadors of Finland, Jordan, and most recently the UK. Then every year, we have a celebration of women diplomats which is really wonderful—I highly recommend it. This year that event was hosted by the ambassador of Lichtenstein, who I'm sure many of you know. We work really closely with the diplomatic community and we're really pleased to see a number of the women diplomats here with us tonight. So thank you so much for joining us. We've also had a number of what we call Beyond the Headlines programs. This is something that Tara can relate to too because these are one of my favorites because they are issues on top of the news. Most recently we had a program on "How Have Women Fared in Egypt?" followed by Turkey's role in Syria just last week, which is very much on top of the news. We're working on a number of exciting events in 2013. So we hope that those who are members will rejoin and those who are not will join us. What I wanted to mention is that one of our big commitments is to mentoring and helping the next generation of women leaders. Every year we have what we call mentoring fairs, one in New York and one in Washington—they will be held in February. You should have information about that. We are looking for mentors—it's a wonderful experience. For those of you who are students, make sure to come because we call it speed mentoring, we ring a bell and we want people to circulate and get exposed to so many different fields. It's just a great opportunity to learn a lot. So that is very exciting. If you have any questions, please see Kimberly—I think she stepped out of the room—or you can ask me. So before I introduce Tara, I just wanted to thank Kimberly—I hope she can hear out there, and all of our interns for working so hard the whole semester, but also especially on this event.

So it's now my great pleasure to introduce Tara. As I mentioned, she is Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. She has been in that position since April of 2012. Prior to that she was executive vice president at the US Institute of Peace—very conveniently right across the street and there she was instrumental in growing the center on gender and it has become quite something over the years in the Institute for Peace. She was a strategic communications advisor and she served at the

White House during the Clinton administration in various capacities—Transition Director, Director of Foreign Policy Planning for the National Security Council and Special Assistant to the President and Deputy Director of Communications for the NSC. When I first met Tara, as I mentioned, she had a distinguished career as a journalist—broadcast, print, and online media. She received ten news Emmys. A bulk of her career was spent at *Nightline*, she was editorial producer there—she also was an off-air reporter at the Pentagon. She also has written numerous articles on foreign affairs, some of which have been published by *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and she was a contributor to *Newsweek*. Please join me in welcoming Tara Sonenshine. [Applause.]

Tara Sonenshine: Happy Birthday!

Ellis: I couldn't think of a better place to spend my birthday!

Sonenshine: Thank you so much Pat for that introduction. It makes us both sound like 82 when you read all of that. [Laughter.] I do want to thank you for your friendship and mentorship over the years. We have looked at each other across many rooms over the years. Sometimes rooms full of all men and sometimes rooms full of women, but we've always been able to give each other that knowing look of support. Do you know that look that women give each other? I'm giving it to you now. [Laughter.] It's pretty special and it is what the Women's Foreign Policy Group, to me, is about—support. It supports women who dedicate their lives and passions to international relations. It amplifies the voices of women who care about foreign policy, who care about what we do in the world so I thank each of you and ask you to really applaud the person sitting next to you and behind you because that person is making a contribution to the international and global community. So thank you.

As one who has been in the “women's space”, we used to call it—it's now the gender field. [Laughter.] It is nice to be able to reflect on the profession of public diplomacy and what can it do to unlock this potential of women and girls. I say potential because we haven't reached in all corners of the world that individual fulfillment and potential. We haven't fully unlocked all that economic, political, social, cultural, educational, awareness, and potential. So when I went recently to—my staff, some of whom are here, are to blame for the trips that included Dominican Republic to Japan—separate parts of the world—and Turkey and Bosnia in the past six weeks. On each trip, I made a point of meeting with women and girls. You know why? We are the barometer. We are the window into societies, communities, and countries. So in the Dominican Republic I met with women from government and civil society who are desperately trying to lower the incidence of domestic violence in their homes. Women are routinely harassed and beaten at home. It is hard to really contemplate being harassed in your own living space. I must tell you, I was very impressed by what the leaders in the civil society and government were doing there with new laws, new procedures, and political willingness to confront it.

So from the DR, I took a few flights to Japan. The women there have totally different concerns. They actually want very much, the women in particular in Japan—even more than their male counterparts, they want to travel overseas and expand their horizons. They particularly do want to come to the United States, but young Japanese women are not studying here in the US as they used to, in the same numbers. I was upset to learn that the number of Japanese students overall coming to US since 2006 has dropped by 50%. So maybe we'll talk later about why that's happened with a country that we have such a close alliance with—why are their students not coming here in the numbers they used to?

On to Bosnia, I had a chance to meet with Bosnian women running NGOs, with Bosnian students, and with LGBT activists. Many of them women, who met with me quietly in a restaurant and they were nervous. They were nervous because many of them cannot express their sexual preferences in their offices or in society at large for fear of recrimination. It is almost 2013, and LGBT activists around the world are still marginalized and discriminated against—as are women in many parts of the world.

Turkey. How many of you have been to Turkey? What a place! I was surprised when I saw in my schedule—although I had asked to do things regarding women—that I was going to the government

office of Women's Issues in the Ministry of Social Policy. What were we going to talk about? Violence against women in Turkey. It's a problem that has gone unattended to for many decades. Today Turkish society has woken up to the fact that they too are facing the reality of abuse. So their country is changing laws and introducing shelters and learning from other countries on how to address the problem in education systems and courts. So what do all these visits confirm? They confirm what you know and I know. Too many women around the world are not getting the chance and the support they need. As we meet, most children who did not go to school today were girls—especially in developing countries. They are short-changed. I think we all quietly know the feeling of sometimes being short-changed, underestimated, and unable to reach our god-given potential. We see it in community after community. So sometimes it feels like we have given this speech a million times about giving women and girls opportunity, programs, and exchanges. Why are we still talking about it? Because we have to. It is simple math. If you want economic growth, if we want global economic growth, if we believe we need people who are educated and skilled, who have incentives to be profitable and have opportunity—it doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that half the sky is sometimes falling or failing.

Then we have this great champion, Secretary Clinton. What a champion. She keeps saying women are the key to economic growth and we have to advance their potential. So that's why in public diplomacy we are spending all of this time on women and girls—on grants, grant solicitation, program design, recruitment, orientation, alumni engagement, and everything we can do to empower women—through film and art and sports. Because you know what happens when you empower women and girls through sports? You coach them. You are coaching them to expect and demand parity on the field and off the field. So ECA, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, is now dedicated to sports and to really making sure that 50% of the participants in all programs are female. That's worth saluting.

Some of you know that we have the International Visitor Leadership Programs, which bring rising leaders for around the world and in the last two years nearly 900 people participated in programs that solely focused on educating women and girls: African Women's Entrepreneurship, African Women's Forum, TechWomen from the Middle East, and one group of women from Egypt, Lebanon, and the Palestinian territories starting their own organization—Professionals in Action. How about STEM? What are we doing to get our women and girls into science, technology, engineering, and math? We have to. We have to get women also starting up their own businesses and sustaining them. We used to just say, let's get them started. It's not enough for them to start, they have to keep going—in Ecuador, in Egypt, in Georgia, in Ghana, in Tajikistan. We have to change their lives—whether it's a teenage pregnancy prevention campaign in Burma or getting entrepreneurs in Yemen. Last year, women's history month, we connected one of Afghanistan's female parliamentarians with 300 young people. They now had a role model. A woman in government in Afghanistan.

I will try to not get too sad when I talk to you about Malala, our young Pakistani girl with that powerful spirit. She continues to recover from a vicious attack that shocked all of us. We now are seeing solidarity for her even with and including the people of Pakistan standing up, not only for girls' education but against extremism. So please take inspiration from Malala. Support her and support all of those young girls so that they can be educated and don't take a wrong turn. So that they don't become a child bride—another shocking problem.

Well, what I can say to you in closing is that we keep debating the issue. There is no more debate. We are done debating the premise. We are just not done doing the work. We know the US government cannot do it on its own. We need all of you with your NGOs, and your embassies, and your private sector, and your groups, and organizations. We thank the foundations who have now stepped up—Ford, MacArthur, private companies [like] MasterCard, and others—who have said, we're going to help end child marriage. We're going to help educate women and girls. I'm going to close with an inspiring woman for all of us—Eleanor Roosevelt. Sometimes you just think of Eleanor Roosevelt being in this room with the Women's Foreign Policy Group. She would have loved this. She had a wonderful way of saying something that sort of seemed funny but was packed with power. She once said and I quote, "A woman is like a teabag; you never know how strong it is until it's in hot water." She was of course

talking about opportunity, which like hot water to a tea bag, brings out the talent and the success of a woman. We have to just keep that flowing. Our futures are at stake. We can make a difference. Eleanor Roosevelt said one last thing worth remembering, "In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility." So thank you for the opportunity to give you these remarks and I look forward to questions and being with you in the balance of our time.

Ellis: Thank you so much Tara. Tara and I will have a little conversation and then we'll open it up and make sure to get to everyone's questions. So I wanted to start off—you're talking about a lot of progress as well as the challenges facing women. And under Secretary Clinton, a lot of progress has been made on women's political and economic empowerment and yet, there is a lot of concern about what will happen next when she departs. We don't know who the next secretary will be of course—I can ask you that of course, but I'm not sure if we'll get an answer here tonight. What I would like to know is how can we ensure that this progress that has been made continues? Could you talk a little bit about what has been institutionalized and incorporated into State Department Foreign Service practices and how much is really related to the leadership and the persona of the Secretary?

Sonenshine: Well firstly, what's been a joy is not knowing who the national security team that the president is going to roll out—the joy of that is that people say, "well what do you know?" And you get to say, "nothing" [*Laughter.*] and not lie—which is really great. A lot is being institutionalized, first and foremost, the wonderful Melanne Verveer and all she's done to execute the Secretary's vision. I think her efforts are woven now into the fabric of the Department. I think the QDDR, the Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, has really underscored that gender is not going away and women are not going away. So I think and I'm very hopeful with that office and with Melanne there, or even beyond in years to come, will be part and parcel of the architecture of the State Department.

Ellis: But Hillary has played such an inspirational role as well as an operational role in ensuring that these things not only happen but happen with women and ensuring that women are always present at meetings—all those kinds of things. Could you just address that side of it as well?

Sonenshine: Sure, I think firstly the Secretary's voice on women and girls is going to be loud and clear for all years that she will be here and I think we all know that she doesn't enter a room without reminding people. Madeline Albright said to me one day, and others have heard this, that "there is a cold place in hell for women who don't help women." [*Laughter.*] Have any of you heard that? I think that those Secretaries and Secretary Rice—Madeline Albright told me that her granddaughter asked one day, "Are men allowed to be Secretary of State?" [*Laughter.*] So I think first, the Secretary has put a lot of women into a lot of key positions and so I don't go into meetings anymore—and sometimes to be perfectly honest, there are only a few good men in the room at high levels. So I think she has managed to put that fiber in and I don't think it's going anywhere—that sense that women will be in the room and at the table.

Ellis: So another concern that a lot of people have relates to Afghanistan. A lot of people are worried about what happens when the US and NATO leave in 2014. I'm just wondering if you could talk about what type of planning, what kind of steps are being put in place to ensure that all the progress that women have made will not be just eradicated.

Sonenshine: Firstly, I think we have a woman from our Kabul embassy here.

Ellis: Yes, Stephenie.

Sonenshine: Yes, Stephenie. I would just ask very briefly for Stephenie to say a word about what is happening right now as we speak with women in a 16 day period.

Stephenie Foster: Hi, I'm Stephenie Foster and I work at the US Embassy in Kabul in their public affairs section focusing on women. I would say a couple of things we're doing with 16 days against violence campaign right now, which is what the Under Secretary is mentioning—we have a lot of events to raise awareness. I think one of the most interesting things in Afghanistan is just that there a lot of very courageous women and men who are really trying to make a difference and trying to maintain the goals and objectives and the progress that has been made. We try to help them as much as we can, knowing that we can only do so much—that they really have to work on building a future for their country that really is an equitable future for everybody. So we're doing that and we have a lot of grant programs for women. We have a lot of things that we do that I really think make a difference.

Sonenshine: Three of them that I just want you to jot down because next time you are at a cocktail party talking about women in Afghanistan, I want you to say, "Did you know that the US State Department has recently funded the first girl's only internet café in Herat? People will say, "Wow, that's really interesting." "Do you know that nine female corrections officers from Afghanistan are coming to the US for some training from our department of correctional services?" Do you know where they are going? Lincoln, Nebraska. Do not ask me why. Then maybe you can say, "Did you know that they are giving women all of this training in how to garden—Women's Garden project—so that they can help develop their own family farms that aren't poppy farms—maybe chicken crops and other agricultural things." Every day I look at what we are doing for women in Afghanistan and it is so inspiring—it really, really is. So thank you for the work you do in Kabul.

Ellis: I would like to turn to the Arab Spring and the follow-up to that. The Middle East is in turmoil and it varies from country to country, but it obviously affects women because it's all part of the move towards democratization and their aspirations. I'm just wondering if you could say something about what role the US can play at this point to support women but not harm them, because it's a very delicate balance at this point.

Sonenshine: Well one thing we can do is support women who support women in Egypt. I think Cynthia Schneider came in—she's in the back, she always comes to support me at things, which I'm always grateful. Her program, which I will let her say a word about is really giving women in the Arab Spring countries their voice—literally letting them sing and share a microphone. Maybe you could just quickly say a word about Share the Mic?

Cynthia Schneider: Thanks so much, Tara. I had the great fortune to work with a private company called Share the Mic last spring. Our program—that was basically designed on an American Idol model—called Sing Egyptian Women. The idea was noticing the vacuum of women in the public space in Egypt following the revolution and to give them a platform to sing and perform and compete. So we had many women from a lot of different parts of Egypt competing. The voting was online—public voting online through Facebook. I would say really the highlight was that the 16 finalists chosen by public voting—which reached people all over the world. It was unbelievable, people voted in every continent except Antarctica—which is amazing because there wasn't much publicity. The highlight was that the 16 finalists performed all over Cairo. They became sort of the toast of Cairo. Those 16 girls really bonded together as had the larger groups of semi-finalists. A couple of girls out of that, I think, really potentially have singing careers but most important, the larger number of them got real training in speaking and presentation and how to say who they are and what they care about in 30 seconds. I think they will go on to participate in their societies with self-confidence and that was really the goal and that is what we hope to continue.

Sonenshine: So one of the things we can do is keep linking ourselves to women doing extraordinary things. A lot of the women who come on exchange programs go on to do extraordinary things. They go on to run companies and NGOs and foundations and they go on sometimes to be heads of state and Nobel Peace Prize Laureates. So part of it is planting seeds and when you do that, just amazing things grow. I think that is what tonight is about—is that you get to hear from women doing really important work.

Ellis: A few more things I wanted to raise and then we'll open it up. I'll tell you the topics—one relates to mentoring, one is the sports thing that you mentioned, and the other is Pakistan. You visited Pakistan during a time of very tense relations between the US and Pakistan. I'm just wondering if you could talk a little bit about what that visit was like and the importance of the visits in keeping the dialogue going and how women—I think you met with university women?

Sonenshine: Yes. So the first shock came when I went home and told my family that I was going to Islamabad and Lahore. My 15-year-old, without missing a beat, said, "La-WHAT?" And I said, "Lahore." He said, "That sounds like Spanish for prostitution." [*Laughter.*] I said, "No no no I said, it's spelled L-A-H-O-R-E." They were kind of a little concerned. It was a tense moment—it was before the GLOCs [Ground Lines of Communication] had opened, which were the Afghanistan-Pakistan routes that had been blocked because relations were so difficult. First reason I went is because we have one of the largest Fulbright programs in the world in Pakistan. Who knew? I didn't know that. So I wanted to meet our Fulbright partners in Pakistan and I wanted to talk to students who had participated in programs. I wanted to go to an all-girls college—Kinnaird College in Pakistan, and really hear from the students themselves. I was warned that the questions are going to be very hostile and very hard hitting and that even though you are there for public diplomacy, they are going to ask you about all kind of military, political, and security issues. Some of them were pretty hard hitting—the questions were tough. I have to say, these women had a lot of their mind about the US and Pakistan and a lot they wanted to say and ask. But at the end, after some rough Q&A, I told them that they were welcome to come up and just chat privately if they wanted to. This long line formed and each one came up with these beautiful Pakistani faces and said, "Even though I asked that question, how do I get on a US program to visit one of your universities?" [*Laughter.*] You look into their eyes and they're just so full of inspiration and hope and they want to improve their societies. So public diplomacy is a great bridge, a great cultural bridge, because even when things are going down and news is bad and relations are tense—it just keeps on peddling and it just keeps on keeping on. I think that's the beauty of the profession.

Ellis: In terms of the sports initiative, I read yesterday it was announced that a group from the Gulf is coming—they are volleyball coaches from Qatar, Yemen, Oman—could you just talk about what this sports diplomacy is doing? Because it is rather unique from countries that you might not expect to have it.

Sonenshine: Sure, well we do now have partnerships with ESPN Women, and we have lots of relationships where we're sending even women basketball players overseas. What happens on a sports field when these coaches come is there is this sort of level playing field effect. First of all it's a sport but it's about competition, it's about reaching your potential and it's about teamwork and it's about physical education and it's about socialization. It's about playing on a team sometimes with the other. There is nothing more powerful than when you see women and girls who, in other walks of life, might face discrimination or lack of advancement—they get out there and they play and they learn. We learn from them. Our basketball players went to Burma, and discovered that basketball in Burma is done with dance. They were horrified, but they did it. They coached and they met with young people often in very rural and impoverished areas. The other wonderful thing about sports is that it opens the way for conversations about playgrounds and fields and baseball and outdoor activity where people have been closed up in spaces that aren't breathing. So just let your minds wander—it just goes into every sport and every kind of interaction. As you can tell, I'm gung-ho sports diplomacy. We also recently hired Michelle Kwan. She is doing a lot of work with us in what we hope will be the first major summit on sports diplomacy. Think about the Olympics, think about the winter games and the summer games—it's just endless and limitless—the possibilities in athletics.

Ellis: So lastly, you mentioned that everyone can make a difference. Since we are really into mentoring and have a full stable of wonderful people who want to help and are great mentors, I'm wondering what the State Department is thinking about in terms of tapping into this great resource?

Sonenshine: So we're thinking about unveiling—in about two weeks—a new series that I will be doing with Rose Gottemoeller who is our Acting Under Secretary for Arms Control and Nonproliferation Issues. She and I teamed up, because Rose recognizes that we need women scientists and technologists for her field of arms control and verification, and science. You and I know from the social science and public diplomacy side—so we're going to kick off a series that invites lots of women who want to mentor and be involved. You'll all hear about it through your organizations. Also we've noted the February college mentoring fair and we'll make sure that we have somebody there if they dispatch me to some far-flung place—I've learned not to commit in advance, but we will be represented I can promise.

Ellis: Fantastic. It's rewarding and great fun. That's wonderful, so let's open it up. We have a mic here and we'll get to everybody.

Question: Good evening, I'm Kristin Haffert with Haffert Global. Thank you very much Under Secretary and Pat. My question is about how the US can use its platform better to help other countries understand the value of investing in women. I came actually directly here from being with the MacArthur Foundation all day, and MasterCard, and Gordon Brown and Gene Sperling, and it was really inspiring because I saw these very senior guys in amazing leadership positions talking about women in a different way than I had heard in a long time. I really felt good about it and I have been working with women for 20 years—political participation, education, and now I'm a gender specialist. This idea of women being the barometer—I think it would be great if we could take leadership on really helping understand why women are the barometer. They were talking about gender equality and girls' education, and child labor, and child marriage in a way that was really striking to me today. So I'm wondering what ECA, or your office, or just in general what we're doing to take this opportunity a little more. I know Melanne and the Secretary have led the charge in many ways, but we are we doing to specifically to really show what the return investment is? Whether it's a political investment or business?

Sonenshine: It's a great question and I would just point to three specific things. On the entrepreneur front what we're doing is using the convening power of the State Department to put women entrepreneurs in one place. Then what happens, we've noticed, is that they form their own communities and they peel off and then they start networking on their own. So one is using the convening power that the State Department has to put people together and to then encourage them to network for themselves. That seems to be effective. The second piece is using social media and social networking. This morning I did a Q&A on twitter live in nine languages. Don't worry I don't speak in nine languages, but they set up a bank of translators. So questions were coming and being translated and I was answering and then they were going out in different languages. You can guess that I was putting the women's message in wherever I could, because I think we have to avail ourselves on every platform—traditional media, television, radio, online, physical forum—it's all really important. The third is these leadership programs and IVLP programs—we have to get women out talking to women. That makes the connection, because when you put those women leaders and role models with other women, they walk away with three things: communication skills, a sense of community, and confidence. It's still a lot about confidence building and just reinforcing, that you can do it. You can be what you want to be. I think that message online is great but when you are in the room and you can say to a young girl, "You can do whatever you want." They hear that in a different way. So I hope we can get a lot of you out doing that.

Question: Hi, I'm Ronna Freiberg with LSI Associates, which is a consulting firm here in Washington. I want to begin by thanking Tara. I've had the occasion on behalf of a client in the non-profit sector to do some work with you and your team on English language learning projects as well as on the Opportunity Grant program, which is a terrific small program that helps low-income students, largely from Africa I think, come study in the United States. Some of those students of course are women. My question is not really related to those things, I simply wanted to say what a pleasure it has been working with you and commend you on the responsiveness of the staff at the public diplomacy department. Here's my

question though, whether we go over the fiscal cliff or not, public diplomacy programs always get a great deal of scrutiny in the budget process by the Congress. There are demands that you prove the effectiveness of these programs. My sense is that in this administration there has been a lot done to try to demonstrate that these programs have a positive impact. I wonder if you could address that Tara. I think it's important going forward to ensure that budgets are not cut terribly.

Sonenshine: So I think one or two of you showed up at the Heritage Foundation on Monday. I waded into that terrain to give a speech about something that you and I care desperately about and that's evaluation and monitoring. For a long time—you're right—there was this sense that it's kind of qualitative experience and it's over a long term and maybe it doesn't lend itself—but the truth is that for about 15 years ECA has been measuring impact and what we really needed to do was pull all of the facets of evaluation that is going on across public diplomacy. Put it in one place and explain what we're doing. We're using various pieces of evaluation—surveys, polling, internal examination of programs, external consultants, people going out and asking and checking over five or ten years—how have you used this public diplomacy program? Where did you end up? Did you end up using it in the good of your society? That is very measurable. It actually turns out that you can ask people—what did you do one year or two years or five years after you participated in a program? Guess what? 71% of them in certain countries we've polled went on to do some civic minded project or profession. That's extraordinary data and so I will make sure firstly that we can get you the speech, because it's full of data. It's really important that we keep making the point that we can measure and we can evaluate. We can see it making a difference. Thanks.

Ellis: Yes. Other questions? Do you mind if we take a few together?

Question: I'm not sure if this is going to do well in part of a double question. First of all, I wish you and everyone else in the room had been with me at dinner last with the new head of the World Bank, because he said exactly what Secretary Clinton said—not only that women are the key to economic development but he elaborated, with no notes, very substantively, so if you haven't spent time with him, take the time because he is a wild card that has credibility in ways that we're only just beginning to see. But going back to the role of public diplomacy and I realize this is women's organization and women's issues and I'm older than a boulder so I literally have been mentoring women when I was so young I should have been mentored, but I didn't have mentors. I have two questions—people are actually starting to realize the economic power, ability and importance of women, but what is being done to change the minds of men? I happen to be on the board of a foundation in India that is working with the Indian military and all sorts of things on violence against women and girls. That was just an eye opener because most people are just focusing on the victims and women and girls, but this is focusing on changing the minds and the culture of the men. So that's the first question. The second question is that in your broader position—by the way, condolences as well as congratulations—what is US public diplomacy in your mind now? There has been no discussion really about how this has been changing the increasingly negative, contradictory, and trivialized view of the United States abroad. Our ability to bring moral leadership and having to go through secondary countries and through women as a gender to be able to do these things—at the end of the day your job is still about the United States. So that is my two part question.

Ellis: Could you just introduce yourself please.

Question: Diana Lady Dougan and I did pay my dues in government—both as an assistant secretary and a permanent rank ambassador which means you get a good seat in a bad restaurant. *[Laughter.]* I've lived a number of different lives and I'm a serial failure at retirement. So one of my more recent endeavors is that I'm very involved in producing documentary films that make a difference—I was thinking *Kick Like a Girl* and even *Saving Face*—these are some of the ones we've been involved in catalyzing. So I really resonate with the issues of the role of women, but back to those two questions.

Sonenshine: Two questions. The first one is how we change men—thank you for bringing your husband tonight, because part of how you change men is you make sure they are in the room and at the table. We allow them now to be at the table and in the room, but it is really quite important to have the dialogue and the conversation. Also I would credit the military for recognizing the importance of female engagement teams in places like Afghanistan, where it's really important that male soldiers have female engagement teams to understand that when you go into a village or a rural community in Afghanistan—often those women are making some decisions and when you're at checkpoints, you can't search women the way a male checkpoint officer might. I think they've opened themselves up now to the reality that it does take a village and that village has men and women in it.

On the second, public diplomacy to me is people-to-people. I do know that it proceeds from the notion that it is US national security in our case and we're telling and sharing and participating in people-to-people engagement, but remembering that it is for our national security purposes that we engage in public diplomacy. That it's not sport—that it is real important business of the nation that we be engaged with real people whose lives are changed by policy and whose actions in the public square do have resonance and do echo in all parts of the global community so I do see it as a national security imperative that we be engaged with individuals and that we recognize that without people, the policies really are flying blind. So thank you for your service earlier to USIA and to many aspects of government service. ITVS is also somewhere in the room and they also do documentaries so you guys should network.

Ellis: Okay, we're going to take a few questions on this side together and then go back to this side. So please raise your hand.

Question: Hi, I'm Rachel Brandenburg from the US Institute of Peace—Tara's former home. My question actually falls under that because that was going to be the basis of my question—but in your conversations overseas, are you talking to boys and men also? If so, is there sort of receptivity to this idea of gender integration or involving them in the conversations and the programs?

Sonenshine: What's really interesting is that we spent the last day with young boys and girls in Sarajevo and they had come from different ethnic backgrounds. Not only was there gender baggage going in for them but there was ethnic tension for the group. These are boys and girls of high school age going overseas for five weeks to Seattle, Washington and Washington, DC. They had just come back and I met them in a mountain ski lodge outside of Sarajevo where we could really just talk. The Ambassador came with me from Sarajevo and it is remarkable how much young boys understand the gender issue in ways that older men don't. They are open-minded and for them, the ethnic divide trumps the gender divide. So they had all left barely able to speak to one another as Bosniaks, Croats, Muslims, and Serbs. They came back saying that they felt that they needed each other, whether they were boys or girls, they knew they needed one another and it was very, very powerful. So I do think sometimes our best hope might be the young high school and college-aged, and young professional boys. In Japan—the same thing. They are just so ready to come into the world in a different place and in a different space. So I think that's a real important window for us.

Question: A quick follow-up on Egypt. I wonder what you think, if anything, we can do now? I'm getting tweets as we speak—people are being shot and beaten. I know that happens all over the world—people are being killed every day in Syria so that's not a unique situation, but more specifically to this topic, the new constitution, which has absolutely nothing helpful whatsoever to women that I understand. Do you think that we can do anything at all? Or do we really just have to sit back and say, "this is internal"?

Sonenshine: It's not so much what we can do, but I think what we can't do. And what we can't do is preach and demand and insist and insert. It is a time—what we can do is reinforce our hopes and beliefs that the Egyptian people have to be included in this process and I just don't think this is a time where we get up on our high-horses and say "you must". We've tried that in earlier decades and I think

that what we can do is express our values, express our support, keep doing our programs, keep doing our exchanges—bring Egyptians here, many of whom have studied here and have really strong feelings about the United States. I guess I would kind of close, with the exception of one last question, with one story about Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. The day after Ambassador Stevens was killed—and his colleagues, there happened to be an exchange program going on and students from the Arab Spring countries—high school students—were in the State Department—just coincidentally, the day after and they were from Benghazi and Tripoli and Tunis. I went down to chat with them and I came into the room and many of them bowed their heads. I went around the room and asked them to introduce themselves and each of them started by saying, “I am so sorry, Madame Undersecretary, for your loss”. First of all, I have 15-year-olds and they never say they are sorry about anything [*Laughter.*] or express condolences, much less in a group setting. And what they ended up saying in that setting was, “Please don’t judge us poorly or badly based on things you see on your television screens or things that are negative that happen” and here, I was also thinking, “don’t judge us badly” and you just have to keep believe in the power of individuals and in particular, young people, over which 60% is—we’re all getting younger, to really just believe in them and believe in their capabilities and stand behind them and I think that’s what the US is really good at.

Question: My name is Genie Nguyen and I’m from Voice of Vietnamese Americans and I thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us. How do you empower the people from Asia, especially from Vietnam? I am very concerned because of human trafficking happening to many, but not all women in Vietnam because of the current situation in the South, where living is very difficult and also in the South China Sea, where the living is almost impossible because they are not allowed to fish. So in many families, the husbands have been killed and many young girls are unable to make a living so they just sell themselves.

Sonenshine: This is very, very important and the human trafficking issue is very, very important. As you know, there’s a report done every year on human trafficking and our DRL, Democracy Rights Labor office, really works hard on this. I do know that there’s some initiatives, which afterwards we can talk to you about, with the Mekong Delta Initiatives and some special projects being done on water diplomacy but I think you raise some really, really important issues that we have to keep fighting for and be robust about and we’ll make sure that we get your email and send you everything that we are specifically doing on Vietnam and in the Asia Pacific region.

Question: I’m Mary O’Connor. I’m a trustee at Meridian International Center, as you know Tara, and I want to take this to a little bit different level. I’ve had the opportunity to witness the IVLP programs a lot at Meridian and met women from the Middle East over and over again and I see one question that I’d love you to answer. There seems to be in Congress, as divisive as it is, a very distant relationship between these incredible women that are coming here from all over the world, that give the greatest stories—do you all at the State Department take an advocacy role with women on the Hill to really understand the human nature of these incredible women who are putting their lives on the line to come from Afghanistan to learn from us and what does State do to encourage more communication with our Congress, particularly the women members?

Sonenshine: In my view, and I’ve said this to staff, we are not the best ambassadors for public diplomacy—the people from these countries are. And when students come we need to be taking them up to the Hill. When women from Afghanistan come they need to tell their stories and I truly and genuinely agree with you. We have to bring those local voices to the Hill. I would say a second thing—I genuinely think we need to build a stronger domestic constituency for global engagement and it’s difficult because as some of you know, under this current Smith-Mundt, which is a long, outdated legislation that restricts some resources from public diplomacy that are designed for overseas messaging, to be used domestically. I’m hopeful—or, we’re all hopeful that maybe that will get modernized we’ll remove one barrier to doing the kind of domestic education of our members and populations. But I’ve gone out of my way in this position to go to universities here as well as overseas, to Syracuse and USC and Drake University, because we have to build a generation of Americans that

care about global engagement and then their members will hear it and they will get the point. We have to demonstrate the economic value to members of congress. Last year, international exchange students generated—what's the figure now? 22? I think it is. State by state income, from international students—and there are senators and members of congress from those states. Those states benefit from international exchange and if we have to make the argument on economic grounds, then we'll make it on economic grounds, but we have to care about being engaged and that the young people coming behind us care about being engaged globally and internationally. So, I thank each and every one of you for the work you do across multiple sectors, but keep bringing the next generation along—the students, the interns, the graduates—we need you to take up the charge.

Ellis: Well, one thing that is so encouraging, Tara—one thing is to have you where you are, but two, to see that we have wonderful interns in our office and other students here with us tonight. They're studying so many languages, they're so caring and involved in the world and this is a great sign of encouragement. I just want to thank you for taking all of your time after this very long trip and for sharing all of your insights and all of these really important issues that we all care so deeply about. I want to thank all of you for coming out—for your good questions and we look forward to seeing you soon and to continuing the dialogue and to finding ways to make a difference. So happy holidays!

Sonenshine: So here we go!

[Sonenshine and audience sing Happy Birthday.]