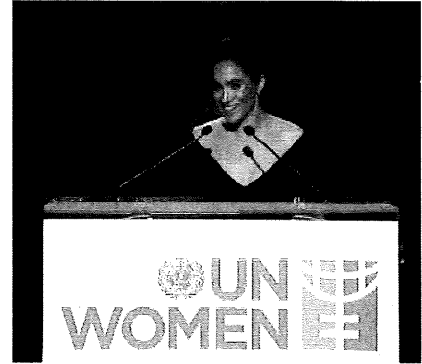


## Meghan Markle's UN Women Speech 2015

*Meghan Markle, Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Sussex, married Prince Harry in 2018 at St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. Ms. Markle was an American actress and humanitarian. Her charitable work involves advocating for women's rights and continues to support women and girls living in third world communities around the world.*

I am proud to be a woman and a feminist, and this evening I am extremely proud to stand before you on this significant day, which serves as a reminder to all of us of how far we've come, but also amid celebration a reminder of the road ahead.

- 5 "I want to tell you a story that'll sort of give context to my being here and my work with UN Women. When I was just eleven years old, I unknowingly and somehow accidentally became a female advocate. It was around the same time as the Beijing conference, so a little over twenty years ago, where in my hometown of Los Angeles a pivotal moment reshaped my notion of what is possible.
- 10 See I had been in school watching a TV show in elementary school and, um, this commercial came on with the tag line for this dish washing liquid and the tag line said, 'Women all over America are fighting greasy pots and pans'. Two boys from my class said, 'Yeah, that's where women belong, in the kitchen'. I remember feeling shocked and angry and also just feeling so hurt;
- 15 it just wasn't right, and something needed to be done. So I went home and told my dad what had happened, and he encouraged me to write letters, so I did, to the most powerful people I could think of.



- "Now my eleven year old self worked out that if I really wanted someone to hear me, well then I should write a letter to the First Lady. So off I went, scribbling away to our First Lady at the time, Hillary Clinton. I also put pen to paper and I wrote a letter to my news source at the time, Linda Ellerbee, who
- 20 hosted a kids news program, and then to powerhouse attorney Gloria Allred, because even at eleven I wanted to cover all my bases. Finally, I wrote to the soap manufacturer. And a few weeks went by and to my surprise I received letters of encouragement from Hillary Clinton, from Linda Ellerbee, and from Gloria Allred. It was amazing. The kids news show, they sent a camera crew to my home to cover the story, and it was roughly a month later when the soap manufacturer, Proctor & Gamble, changed the
- 25 commercial for their ivory clear dish washing liquid. They changed it from 'Women all over America are fighting greasy pots and pans' to 'People all over America'. It was at that moment that I realized the magnitude of my actions. At the age of eleven I had created my small level of impact by standing up for equality.

- 30 "Now, equality means that President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, whose country I recently visited as part of my learning mission with UN Women, it means that he is equal to the little girl in the Gihembe refugee camp who is dreaming about being a president one day. Equality means that UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is equal to the young intern at the UN who is dreaming about shaking his hand. It means that a wife, it means that a wife is equal to her husband; a sister to her brother. Not better, not worse – they are equal.

- 35 "UN Women, as you guys know, has defined the year 2030 as the expiration date for gender inequality. And here's what's staggering, the studies show that at the current rate, the elimination of gender inequality won't be possible until 2095. That's another eighty years from now. And when it comes to women's political participation and leadership the percentage of female parliamentarians globally has only increased by 11% since 1995. 11 percent in 20 years? Come on. This has to change. Women make up
- 40 more than half of the world's population and potential, so it is neither just nor practical for their voices, for our voices, to go unheard at the highest levels of decision-making.

45 “The way we change that, in my opinion, is to mobilize girls and women to see their value as leaders, and to support them in these efforts. To have leaders such as President Kagame of Rwanda continue to be a role model of a country which has a parliamentary system comprised of 64% female leaders. I mean, it’s the highest of any government in the world and it’s unbelievable. We need more men like that, just as we need more men like my father who championed my eleven-year-old self to stand up for what is right. In doing this, we remind girls that their small voices are, in fact, not small at all, and that they can effect change. In doing this, we remind women that their involvement matters. That they need to become active in their communities, in their local governments, as well as in the highest parliamentary positions. It is just imperative: Women need a seat at the table, they need an invitation to be seated there, and in some cases, where this is not available, well then you know what, they need to create their own table. We need a global understanding that we cannot implement change effectively without women’s political participation.

55 “It is said that girls with dreams become women with vision. May we empower each other to carry out such vision — because it isn’t enough to simply talk about equality. One must believe it. And it isn’t enough to simply believe in it. One must work at it. Let us work at it. Together. Starting now.”