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## Letter from Betty Friedan to Geraldine Ferraro

Betty Friedan

Geraldine Ferraro

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BETTY FRIEDAN  
1 LINCOLN PLAZA  
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10023

AUG 10 1984

WASH.

July 25, 1984

Rep. Geraldine Ferraro  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Geraldine Ferraro:

I wanted to put down for your eyes to see, what I also felt in my heart on the stage of the Opera House in San Francisco...my great pride and joy, and nameless emotions more profound than I would have believed, at your having been nominated as Vice President of the United States. I have positively exulted in the electricity your nomination has generated, not only among women but also among men, young and old, black and white, and I applaud your superb performance in this historic role.

A year ago I was not in favor of the demand for a woman Vice President, which then seemed an abstract, symbolic gesture. But as the campaign progressed, it became clear to me that this was a real political possibility because of the gender gap, as well as the only way to defeat Regan. At the meeting on the Hill after the last primary in June, which I attended with Barbara and others, I placed your name first on the short list of real women who we felt would lend real strength and support to Mondale. On July 4th, I told Fritz that the naming of a woman would lift this campaign to a level of historic resonance and generate enormous passion and energy among women, and those who have previously been left out, as it certainly has.

The response to your nomination is even greater than I had anticipated. My own phone began ringing at midnight before the announcement and in effect has not stopped since I have been back from San Francisco. I have had so many messages from women, some I know and some I do not, asking how they can work in your campaign. They will work to elect Mondale/Ferraro of course, but it is your presence on the ticket that is generating this great excitement from women, some not necessarily feminists and some even Republican.

I strongly urge you, as I am sure others are doing, to set up some machinery within Democratic Headquarters to receive and use this tremendous outpouring of volunteer women. I do not feel that the business-as-usual, male democratic machinery, nor the previous women's committees, nor the feminist organizational networks are equipped to handle this task. In the end these women may go on to become active Democrats and/or Feminists, but at this moment they wish to make history by helping to elect you and they can be used in extraordinary ways that have not been seen in previous campaigns. I will be


happy to help with this task or in any other way you can use my support, whether it be acting as surrogate as I have for Mondale in the past, or just by lending personal moral support.

I also want to urge you to trust your own judgement and to use your own style while on the campaign trail. I am glad you are going to use seasoned political experts like Ann Wexler, and I feel you are absolutely right to call on and get top professional help. But please remember what you are doing is without precedent. There are no role models, and there is not much the experts can tell you from previous campaigns that will apply here. You come across so very well being yourself, so please continue to be yourself. I traveled with Indira Gandhi right after she became Prime Minister, and recognized for the first time that there is a slightly different political style when a woman with recognized confidence in herself assumes real power. I think you have that style. Do not let anyone tamper with or dull the woman's style, strength, and voice you represent. (In case you have not read it, I am sending you a copy of THE SECOND STAGE. You are a "second stage" political woman).

It was a peak experience for me that day in San Francisco. I was kvelling. Women, even photographers and reporters, were hugging and kissing me like the mother of the bride. While I have not always liked being called the mother of the women's movement (I am still moving in it, one of the sisters also), I did feel that kind of pride that day. I also felt a great sense of humility, and I expect that you are now feeling that same humility. I have felt this way at various special moments during the past twenty years...a sense of history working itself out through my life...as it is now in your life. It is an awesome feeling, and I think you will be worthy of it.

I have a feeling we are going to win this election as a result of your presence on the ticket, and because of the strength and vision that Fritz has exhibited in making the historic leap that your nomination represents. The energy, the hope, and the dreams that so many women are now investing in you will give you more energy and far greater strength than you ever realized possible. I wish you joy on the road, and you have my support wherever, whenever, however you need it.

From My Heart,



Betty Friedan

BF/ab