

Chelsea Clinton Campaigns at UM, Participates in Hourlong Q&A

Contributed by Tobie Baker
03/11/2008

Chelsea Clinton speaks to a crowd gathered outside of the union on Monday morning. UM photo by Robert Jordan.

OXFORD, Miss. - From the sunny Student Union plaza on the University of Mississippi campus Monday morning, Chelsea Clinton campaigned for her mom, Hillary Clinton, to become the Democratic candidate in the 2008 presidential election.

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With students on spring break, a crowd of about 200 people gathered for the hourlong question-and-answer session, which covered a range of topics including universal health care, crime prevention, immigration and education.

"We desperately need to see progress in America," said Chelsea Clinton, who was dressed in jeans and a blazer. "I passionately support my mom for the Democratic nominee, and I hope you will too tomorrow at the polls."

Standing in front of a banner that read "Hillblazers: Our Voice, Our Future," Clinton, when asked to comment on rising tuition cost for college students, said there are billions of dollars lost annually in unpaid student loans. She said her mom will work to increase awards and provide better access to federal Pell grants.

"I'm 28, but this is still such an issue for me, my friends as well as students here," she said. "The question so many young people face today: Do you pay your student debt or

give up your passions?"

UM library dean Julia Rholes said Chelsea provided a young person's perspective on the issues, and perhaps can help increase awareness of her mother's positions among younger voters. A Clinton supporter for the nomination, Rholes said she was thrilled to see the topic of education raised.

"There has not been as much attention paid to education in the media or in the debates," Rholes said. "Obviously, education matters a great deal to all of us here at the University of Mississippi. Improving education and expanding educational opportunities are critical to the future of this country."

Chelsea was also questioned about future roles she and her father, former President Bill Clinton, may play in her mom's administration if she is elected. The former president has worked with both President George W. Bush and his father, former President George H.W. Bush, but Chelsea said she and her father have other priorities.

"It's been a topic of conversation, but dad will continue to work with his foundation," Chelsea said. "For me, I'm on the campaign trail, but I have a private life in New York with an apartment, a job and a dog."

Bill Gottshall, director of UM's Trent Lott Leadership Institute, said that despite being a Republican himself, he was impressed with Chelsea Clinton.

"She offered clarity on the issues, at least from a Democratic standpoint," he said. "She's a very informed, educated young lady."

Mississippi's presidential primary election is Tuesday (March 11). With Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama in a

tight race to seal the Democratic nomination, the Magnolia State could play an unprecedented role in the process.

UM hosts the first of three scheduled presidential debates
Sept. 26.