

HILLARY CLINTON

# Blonde Ambition

How the polarizing politician has successfully reinvented herself. Again. **by DANIELLE PERGAMENT**

**Whatever you think** about Hillary Clinton, you no doubt think something. Whether you want to pat her on the back or turn your back to her, the woman elicits powerful reactions. She also elicits respect on the world stage, and when she doesn't get it, she demands it. That is one of the things that make her best suited for her job. (But we'll get to that.)

Modern America loves its female secretaries of state—maybe the “softer sex” is seen as better suited to issues of diplomacy. And while Condoleezza Rice and Madeleine Albright both brought tremendous experience to the job, neither packed a house like Hillary Clinton. She just brings a bigger microphone to the job, commanding the attention and respect of people and world leaders due in part to her high profile, sure, but also because of her resume. She was the first former First Lady to run for public office, the first female senator

from New York, and the first woman to have a real shot at the presidency. She's also been to more countries (80) and met with more heads of state (exact number unclear, but it's a big one) than we have space to list. And that was all before she became our chief diplomat.

Clinton took over the State Department at a moment when entire continents seemed to hate the U.S. government. It was also a time when the world had any number of wars that needed ending, peace agreements that needed negotiating, and deals that needed brokering. Her to-do list includes stopping nuclear proliferation in Iran, halting the Islamic insurgency in Pakistan, promoting civilian projects in Afghanistan, getting us out of the quagmire that is Iraq, and alerting the world to the humanitarian crisis in Congo—to name only a few.

She has worked overtime on those relationships that are either tense or outright disastrous. She made



nice with Russia, spoke publicly about Kim Jong Il's successor, told India that climate change is its problem, too, and she quietly and successfully led 33 countries to set binding conditions for Cuba's re-entry into the Organization of American States. To get all those jobs done, she persuaded the Obama administration to increase the foreign-affairs budget by 10 percent, boosting aid and bringing aboard more diplomats. And it's only been nine months.

Here's a theory: All the things about Clinton that rub people the wrong way—her candor, her outspokenness, her gumption, her ambition—are the very things that now make her so good at her job. To put it bluntly, she's not full of shit. This could not have been made clearer than in that incident in Congo, when a young man asked the secretary of state, "What does Mr. Clinton think through the mouth of Mrs. Clinton?" Hillary was pure Hillary. "My husband is not the Secretary of State. I am. If you want my opinion, I will

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tell you my opinion. I'm not going to be channeling my husband." And in one brilliant and honest moment, the point of her entire trip promoting women's rights was made manifest. It's not a slogan or a policy speech, it's the necessity for men and women to be treated equally.

Finally, Clinton is a patriot. Not in that my-patriotism-is-bigger-than-your-patriotism sort of way. She's the kind of patriot who believes America is an exciting, inspiring country that can be and has been a force for good in the world.

For decades it was as easy to argue against Hillary as it was to argue for her. But in her brief tenure as Secretary of State, a new Hillary Clinton has emerged—a highly intelligent, uncommonly thoughtful, and profoundly erudite leader who grasps the complexities of foreign affairs in a way that honors the job description.

"There is a hunger for the United States to be present again," Clinton has said. And that's the best thing about Hillary Clinton—she has a way of making sure everyone knows she's there.

TEDX

## Garage Talk

**The lauded** nonprofit TED's "Ideas Worth Spreading" series is truly inspirational. Through its legendary talks and annual conferences, TED has brought together some of the most influential thought leaders the world over to share their bright ideas. But what if you have your own bright idea, and no podium? Enter TEDx, an offshoot of TED that allows anyone with a great idea to share it at an independently organized event pretty much anywhere in the world. It could be 12 people in someone's basement, or 1,200 in an auditorium—as long as certain criteria are met, and the TEDx team approves it, it can be a TEDx event.

The first of its kind took place this past March at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, with eight speakers, and more than 1,150 registered attendees. Since then some 60 TEDx events have taken place, with another 250 planned all over the globe. The growth is staggering, and proof that the idea of spreading ideas is, well, spreading. "The enthusiasm for the TEDx program, the passion of the TEDx hosts, the quality of the TEDx events, and the rate at which TEDx is spreading across the globe has far exceeded our expectations," says Lara Stein, the licensing director for TED. "TEDx is the just the beginning of a whole new approach for education, and the spreading of ideas across the globe."

### Cola Life

There aren't too many places in the world where you can't buy a Coke, and that includes some of the remotest parts of developing countries. Coincidentally, that's often where aid organizations have the hardest time delivering medicine and other supplies. That's why ColaLife is lobbying the international beverage behemoth to open up its distribution channels for some constructive piggy-backing. The nonprofit is working on a wedge-shaped package that can deliver goods in the space between the bottlenecks in a full crate of Coca-Cola, and in partnership with another NGO, it has already performed a successful test of the idea in Tanzania. In its quest for global beverage dominance, Coca-Cola may have inadvertently built the best tool for international aid. You can't beat that.

