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Open Letter by Susan Terris

A Memo from One Wellesley Classmate to Another

Editor's Note: *Madeleine Albright passed away on March 23, 2022, at the age of 84, and we're republishing this open letter to salute her life and work as a role model for women in government. When this TW piece originally appeared on September 12, 2016, U.S. presidential candidate Hilary Clinton was under fire from many critics.*



Dear Madeleine:

We've been close friends since we met freshmen year at college. I've heard you say over and over for many years that "there's a special place in hell for women who don't support other women." This year, you got trashed by hundreds of smart, politically active, well-educated young women who believe that their generation has shattered the glass ceiling, that they are now on a level playing field with men, that the idea of women needing to support other women is outdated and no longer relevant.

Dear Madeleine Albright

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Maybe this memo is actually addressed to those women and not to you, Madeleine. You and I know this struggle is not over. They, starting out on careers in many fields, do not yet see this. But ask them again in ten years when they, in their thirties, will begin to find more inequality in pay and will find more men promoted above them to higher positions in business, science, and law. And (need I say this?) more men elected to higher political positions.

The young women of 2016 may think the world has now moved far beyond inequality for women. These women are strong and confident. I want them to stay this way, but I worry now about how they will deal with a future they cannot yet see.

Fondly,

Susan

Art Information

- Wini Freund, Madeleine Albright (middle), and Susan Terris at Wellesley College in January 2016 during the annual Albright Institute; courtesy Wellesley College.



Susan Terris's most recent book is *Ghost of Yesterday: New and Selected Poems* (Marsh Hawk Press). She is the author of six books of poetry, fifteen chapbooks, and three artist's books. Her journal publications include *the Southern Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *Ploughshares*. A poem of hers from *Field* appeared in *Pushcart Prize XXXI*. She's editor of *Spillway Magazine*.

Her chapbook *Memos* was published by Omnidawn in 2015 (some of those memos also appeared in *Talking Writing*). A poem from this book was selected for *Best American Poetry 2015*. Omnidawn will publish her book *Take Two: Film Studies* in 2017.

For more information, visit [Susan Terris's website](#) [5].

The opening photo with Madeleine Albright was taken this past January as part of the annual Albright Institute at Wellesley College, when Susan was elected Poet Laureate of the Institute. She says of her friends from the Class of '59:

We three were Wellesley classmates and have remained close for all these years. Wini and I attend [the Institute] every year and participate with Madeleine as a way of showing today's college women that their

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meaningful friendships will not end with graduation.

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