



Friday Grind
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The other day I spent some time thinking about what Caitlin Clark, Taylor Swift, and Beyoncé all have in common. I was trying to think about what characteristics they might share, other than the fact that they are three powerful young women at the top of their games. But then I realized that that itself is extraordinary. They are three powerful women redefining female power and their industries right before our very eyes. As women who grew up without that kind of role model, I find what they're doing beyond inspiring. These women are radically reframing what's possible, as well as what people think of power, talent, motherhood, femininity, and earning capability. So too are leaders like University of South Carolina women's basketball head coach Dawn Staley, who carried her team to the national championship this week and showed us that class and sportsmanship can coexist. I'm thrilled that females, my granddaughter, sons, and all of us get to witness all of these women's accomplishments in real-time.

Last Sunday I heard a Bruce Springsteen concert and was blown away by his energy, passion, drive, and soulfulness as well. Listening to him made me want to keep rising to higher potential in my own life. Bruce is another who began his career tied to a church community; once more his earliest music was about

Sacraments, yes, you heard me. Songs were about his Christianity, so did the University of Connecticut men's basketball team and their fabled story of rising. Their national championship this week gave me and something to celebrate and admire. Today I want to keep talking about what's inspiring me to rise even when I see so much hurt in the world. Sure, I could write about the 1864 law invoked this week by Arizona's conservative Supreme Court that revived a near-total ban on abortion and even punishes providers with prison time. I could write about the devastating conflict between Israel and Iran that is still developing. I could write about the tragic loss of life in Sydney. I could write about climate change and its disastrous impact on all of our health. I could write about the complicated mess at the border, the loneliness epidemic, or even the slouching epidemic (yes, there is a slouching epidemic). As I was reading through the news this week, the list of negative, depressing headlines was just endless. It left me feeling bad, sad, and with a sinking feeling.

But then I rose up and shook myself up and out. I always find this a helpful exercise whenever I need to shift perspective or get a hold of myself and right my ship. So this week, I dusted myself off, jumped up, and reported to jury duty. Yes, I got called into jury duty, lucky me. I actually served on a jury before while serving as First Lady of California, and I saw it as an opportunity and a form of service. I still see it as a

chance to give back in exchange for living in a democracy.

We got our taxes in, another thing I'm glad we get to do because it's part of living in our country. It's part of seeing this as something I get to do as opposed to something that's being forced upon me. Other things I'm glad I get to do are go to my church each Sunday and practice my religion. I also get to freely choose what I want to say in this Grind, as do all of you. I get to vote for whom I choose to vote for. All this week, I chose to focus on the things I get to do, get to see, and get to witness, as opposed to everything that's going wrong. Look, we all know our country has issues. But the truth is that all of us have issues as well. We are all works in progress, as is our country. I think of one of my favorite sayings, "We are all sinners AND saints in progress." So why not believe our country is too? It has sinned, it still sins, and it's on its way to forming a more perfect union. If I've learned anything, it's that confronting one's pain points is messy, courageous, and critical if one wants to get better. I've also learned that the only way to get better or feel better is to try and focus on what's possible and keep working at it every day. We have to stay the course personally, professionally, and politically.

If rising up isn't an option, then what is? If better isn't an option, then we lose hope. And I refuse to become part of a negative epidemic. In fact, I believe that the vast majority of us have hope, need hope, and

want hope. So yes, Bruce Springsteen made me feel hopeful this week. So did watching a child take over the family garage to foster animals in need of love, belonging, and a home. Watching her nurture and take joy in caring for these animals, while educating us about the overcrowding in shelters, was inspiring. Her work in this space is an example of the power of love, belonging, and home and how they can radically transform an animal and a person in real time. Witnessing so many people show up for jury duty also made me feel hopeful. It really did. Reading the comments of the Grind always brings me hope too. Reading Banning Lyon's new book brings me hope about what the human spirit is capable of. In fact, everything in this Grind brings me hope and raises my spirit.

So get up, shake yourself off, and redirect your mind towards the good all around us. Join me in what I'm calling the "hopeful epidemic"—the movement of people of all genders, faiths, races, and ages who are choosing to see and believe in what's good and what's possible. Everyone here, including you, can imagine a brighter future. Each of us can be determined in our own way to make it so. Every act matters—every song, every poem, every story...it all matters. It all helps another person to rise up. So, my friends, get up, shake yourself off, and accept the challenge. Are you with me?

