

Speech for Second Chance Employment Services Client  
Last Kiss of Summer Gala Benefit

Years ago I came to this country as the wife of a foreign diplomat. At the time, it appeared I was living a wonderful life – my husband was powerful and successful, we moved in all the right circles, and we lived in a beautiful house. But my “perfect life” wasn’t perfect at all, for in the privacy of our home, my husband was beating me.

The abuse began when I enrolled in ESL and computer classes. My husband didn’t want me going to school, he said that I belonged at home and didn’t need an education or to learn English. But I wanted to learn the language of the country I was living in, and I wanted to improve myself by furthering my education, so I attended classes despite his objections and abuse.

During this time I became pregnant. I thought my husband would stop beating me because I was carrying his child. Instead, the abuse worsened, and my husband started to withhold money from me. I had no income of my own, and when he did this I began to realize how vulnerable I was, and how important it was for me to speak good English and to develop some marketable skills.

Sadly, before I had the chance to fully accomplish my educational goals—and after my daughter was born—my husband went too far. He tried to kill me by poisoning my food. As I lay in the hospital bed, clinging to life but not knowing what life had in store for me, I finally decided I had to take my children and escape... despite having nowhere to go.

I didn’t return to my homeland because of threats my husband made about "getting" me when I returned to Africa. So for three years my children and I wandered from shelter to shelter. When we had literally run out of places to go, and I had run out of hope, a miracle happened... someone put me in touch with Second Chance.

It’s hard to explain how I felt at that time. I had no hope, no confidence, no money, and no home. The people at Second Chance had an understanding of how women like me feel, and what we need. They did so much along the way to finding a good job for me—they found me an apartment, paid for daycare for my children, provided work clothing, legal assistance, and accompaniment to legal proceedings. They even paid all of our expenses until my first paycheck arrived from my new job at The World Bank.

But besides all of this that can be seen and measured, Second Chance helped me to rebuild my hope and self-confidence, they gave me the moral support I needed to

navigate my immigration problems, to believe in my future, and to never again be a victim of abuse.

I want to thank all of you here this evening. YOU are the supporters that make the work of Second Chance possible. YOU are the ones who lifted my family off the streets and out of legal limbo. Without your contributions, the truth is I really don't know where I would be. I only know I wouldn't be here, standing at this podium in a fancy dress, and going back to a non-violent home tonight.