Paula A. Johnson: 'Real progress doesn't happen overnight'

At Wellesley College, alma mater of Hillary Rodham Clinton ’69, we believe that the surest way to improve the world is through educating and empowering women. As a women's college with more than a century of success in creating women leaders, we understand this mission better than anyone.

Although Secretary Clinton did not become president, we are living at a transformational moment for women and for women's leadership. No matter our political views, the achievements of Hillary Rodham Clinton have set a new standard, both symbolically and literally, for the heights to which women can rise.

For the first time, women see themselves reflected at the highest level of leadership and feel a profound sense of hope for all that is possible. They are inspired to find their voice, to take risks, to match their competence with confidence in pursuing tangible, positive change in the world—to make, as Hillary said to her fellow graduating classmates at Wellesley in 1969, "what appears to be impossible, possible."

History has taught us that real progress doesn't happen overnight. While the opportunity for women's leadership continues to expand, social and economic inequality continues to increase, and these inequities weigh especially heavily on women. Wellesley and other advocates for women's leadership have a responsibility to tackle these inequities head on -- we must keep pushing to transform the world into which the next generation of women will lead.

Paula A. Johnson is the 14th president of Wellesley College. Dr. Johnson, a cardiologist, founded the Connors Center for Women’s Health and Gender Biology and served as its Executive Director and Chief of the Division of Women’s Health at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a Harvard teaching hospital and one of the leading academic medical centers in the world.