

Simply Gloria 'ous'!

On the surface, Gloria Steinem—in spite of her impressive credentials as a women's-rights trailblazer—may have seemed like an incongruous choice to be keynote speaker at the luncheon officially launching FLIC (Female Leadership Interest Council) at Mechanics Hall on November 30th.

There are those who might have suggested someone more "mainstream"...a Barbara Bush, an Oprah Winfrey, a Hillary Clinton, a Barbara Walters.

As it turned out, Steinem proved to be a stroke of genius on the part of FLIC Founder Deborah Penta of PENTA Communications.

The approximately three hundred women in attendance certainly thought so, providing Steinem not only with envious looks at the meet-and-greet that preceded the function but standing ovations in anticipation of, during and after her talk. All of them seemed in awe not only of her accomplishments, her energy, her zest and her active, fertile mind but also her age-defying body. "She's so thin!" Kathy Barron, CEO of Accurate Resource Group Inc., one of ninety-one persons who signed up for the meet-and-greet (Barron also reserved "a table and a half" at the luncheon for associates and clients), said.

That Steinem was unfailingly accessible and accommodating throughout the event was not lost on those present, either. She came in by automobile from New York City in time for the 11:00 o'clock preliminaries, signed autographs, fielded a variety of questions and comments after finishing her remarks and obligingly stayed around for a while at the end. Then it was back to the Big Apple for a flight to the West Coast for the 35th-anniversary party for Ms. Magazine (which she helped create)!

Even Penta's husband—sales impresario Dave Kurlan, who'd admitted at the outset to not being much of a Steinem fan—came away impressed with the encouragement and guidance she offered to her audience. "The best thing is, it's all transportable to everyday life and the business world," Kurlan said.

As has been her fashion since emerging as a prominent spokesperson for women in a male-dominated world, Steinem pounded away at the notion that, although significant advances have been made, "we have just barely begun." She asked, to applause, "Why not national child care? Why



not national health care, which we need by a third more than men? Why not flexible work patterns? We are still way down the list in these and other regards."

Men's idea that women should be feeling what she described as "terminal gratitude" for all that men do for them "is just a way of keeping us down," she said.

In asserting that the cause is "not about excluding men, it's about finding the rest of ourselves," Steinem said she likes to think of

women's rise as like "the caterpillar turning into a butterfly" in terms of change and transformation. Women, not men, should take credit for these strides, she said. She quoted Actress Lee Grant as telling her once, "I've been married to one Fascist and one Marxist and neither one took the garbage out!"

In introducing Liz Walker, who in turn introduced Steinem, Deborah Penta could hardly contain her excitement at the chance FLIC presents for successful women "to pay it forward." By way of the leadership, mentoring and networking opportunities FLIC intends to provide to its membership, the organization stands ready, willing and able to help women "achieve greatness in their lives," Penta said.

So far, so good!

Rod Lee

Rod Lee, Editor



Barbara Clifford of the Corridor Nine Area Chamber of Commerce, left, and FLIC Founder Deborah Penta welcome Gloria Steinem to FLIC's first-ever meeting—at Mechanics Hall.