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First Lady Michelle Obama Invites Sabrina Jenkins, Featured in The Shriver Report, as Guest at the State of the Union

Invitation highlights the impact of The Shriver Report, focusing the country’s attention on the 1 in 3 American women living on or over the brink of poverty

Washington, D.C. — Putting a face on the economic inequality of working women struggling in this country, Sabrina Jenkins—an Air Force veteran and working single mother from South Carolina—will be First Lady Michelle Obama’s invited guest to hear President Barack Obama’s State of the Union address tonight. Sabrina is featured in The Shriver Report: A Woman’s Nation Pushes Back from the Brink.

The Shriver Report, launched this month by Maria Shriver and the Center for American Progress, has sparked widespread coverage and conversation around a stunning new American reality: Fully 42 million American women and the 28 million children who depend on them live on or over the brink of poverty—one broken bone, one broken-down car, one missed paycheck away from economic ruin. Today, women make up nearly two-thirds of minimum wage workers; this at a time when women also earn most of the college and advanced degrees in this country, make most of the consumer spending decisions, and are more than half of the nation’s voters. The mission of The Shriver Report is to shine a spotlight on this reality and propose solutions to turn it around. As part of its launch, Shriver briefed President Obama in the Oval Office on its findings.

Within its first week of publication, this third in the series of multiplatform Shriver Reports shot to number one on Kindle’s Hot New Releases in Women and Politics list, had more than 1 billion media impressions, and reached more than 400 million people on Twitter and Facebook. In March, “Paycheck to Paycheck: The Life and Times of Katrina Gilbert,” co-executive produced by Shriver and HBO’s Sheila Nevins, will air on HBO Documentary Films.

“For too many American women, the dream of ‘having it all’ has morphed into ‘just hanging on,’” said Shriver. “I’m delighted that the president and first lady have identified Sabrina Jenkins, with her indomitable strength and courage, as an example of the challenges working women face every day. We look forward to hearing President Obama address many of the solutions identified in The Shriver Report as opportunities for economic mobility.”

“This is not about handouts,” Shriver continued. “We’re talking about smart economic policy. Working women are the core of our economy. They are half of the U.S. workforce and a whopping two-thirds of the primary or co-breadwinners in American families. Leave out the women, and you don’t have a full and robust economy. Lead with the women, and you do.”

Sabrina Jenkins is the mother of teenage daughter Kenya, whose father left when she was only 4 years old. Sabrina attended college and then served in the Air Force but had to resign when her
mother became ill. Raising her child alone after her own mother’s death, she went back to school while also working full time and providing care to an uncle with Alzheimer’s. She graduated at age 40 with a 3.7 GPA and went on for a master’s degree in human resource management—all this while getting sick herself with rheumatoid arthritis. Sabrina works at the Charleston County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, struggling to keep up with $90,000 of student-loan debt, the cost of medication and health care, and upcoming additional debt as Kenya prepares to go to college. Still, Sabrina plans on getting her doctorate degree.

“It is a thrill and an honor to be invited by the first lady to sit with her in the Capitol while the president gives the State of the Union,” said Sabrina Jenkins. “My story is the story of so many women in this country who are struggling to raise our children and provide for our families while managing our own health needs. I’m grateful to The Shriver Report for starting a discussion about what women need in this country to succeed and thrive.”

CAP President Neera Tanden said, “Sabrina’s story is one of struggle but also perseverance, hope, and determination. It is women like Sabrina that we fight for every day at the Center for American Progress, and I am thrilled and honored that the president and first lady will acknowledge Sabrina and the millions of American women like her. Acknowledging Sabrina’s struggle is the first step toward tackling the challenges facing millions of women and their families, but we know policy solutions are critical to progress. We need new laws on the books that catch up with the reality that is Sabrina’s story and the millions of women she represents.”

Sabrina is featured in The Shriver Report’s extensive photojournalism project. A team of seven award-winning female photographers led by Barbara Kinney crisscrossed the country to document a day in the life of women living on the brink. Former White House photographer Callie Shell, currently a contract photographer for Time, captured Sabrina for The Shriver Report. Journalists can download a series of high-resolution photos of Sabrina Jenkins with captions here.

To speak with Sabrina Jenkins, Maria Shriver, Neera Tanden, The Shriver Report Editor-in-Chief Karen Skelton, or Managing Editor Olivia Morgan, contact Kate Azar, 323-892-2080 kazarn@griiffinschein.com.


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**About The Shriver Report:**
The first Shriver Report, published in 2009, examined a huge transformation in U.S. history: For the first time, women had become fully half the workforce, and even more momentously, were about two-thirds of the primary and co-breadwinners in American families—truly the engine driving the economy. We called this new state of American affairs *A Woman’s Nation Changes Everything*, as the explosion of women becoming breadwinners changed not just the economy, but marriage, families, schools, the workplace, government, health care—everything, including men. The following year, *A Woman’s Nation Takes on Alzheimer’s* was the largest study ever to examine the cultural, social, and economic impact of the Alzheimer’s epidemic, just as the nation’s 78 million Baby Boomers were aging into their mid-60s—Alzheimer’s territory. We reported that women were not only half the people living with the disease but also more than half of the country’s unpaid caregivers. *A Woman’s Nation Pushes Back from the Brink* is the third in the series. For more information, please visit www.ShriverReport.org.

**About the Center for American Progress:**
The Center for American Progress is a nonpartisan research and educational institute dedicated to promoting a strong, just, and free America that ensures opportunity for all. We believe that Americans are bound together by a common commitment to these values, and we aspire to ensure that our national policies reflect these values. We work to find progressive and pragmatic solutions to significant domestic and international problems and develop policy proposals that foster a government that is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.”

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