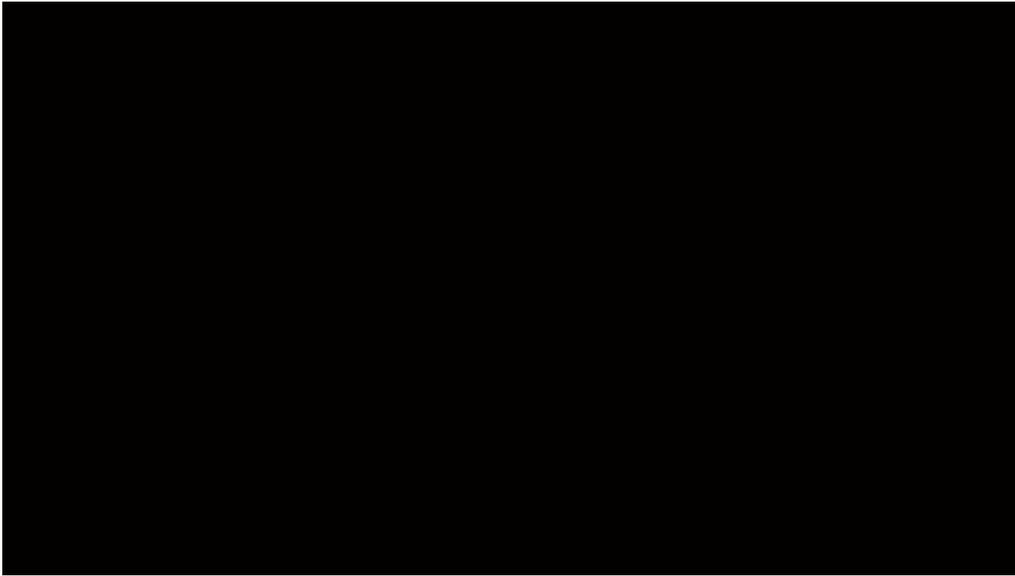


Ellen DeGeneres Interview Offers Hillary Clinton Chance to Connect With Women

By AMY CHOZICK



By MICHAEL LESTER on Publish Date September 8, 2015. Photo by Michael Rozman/Warner Bros.. [Watch in Times Video »](#)

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When “[The Ellen DeGeneres Show](#)” secured the lineup for its fall premiere week, the executive producers were clearly delighted to land an interview with a guest who has become one of the most talked-about and hotly debated women in the country.

They also booked [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#).

Mrs. Clinton will appear on Ms. DeGeneres’s show two days after Caitlyn Jenner, a former Olympic champion who [is transgender](#).

Typically, an appearance by Mrs. Clinton on a national television show — “Ellen” will be her fifth interview since she declared her candidacy in April — would earn top billing, but “Ellen” is not like other shows. Its warmhearted approach and enormous reach among women make it one of the most sought-after interviews for politicians.

Mrs. Clinton’s aides had long been eager for her to do an interview with Ms. DeGeneres this fall, when voters are paying attention to the election, believing it could humanize her beyond policy speeches and political attacks.

As it turns out, the episode, taped Tuesday in front of an audience at Rockefeller Center in New York and scheduled to be broadcast Thursday, could not come at a more opportune moment. Mrs. Clinton is facing an uphill battle to connect with voters, and women, in particular, who recent polls show have been turned off by her [use of a private email server](#) while secretary of state and an increasing sense that she cannot relate to them.

Photo





President Obama danced with Ms. DeGeneres to the Beyoncé song "Crazy In Love" in 2007. Credit Michael Rozman/Warner Bros.

An [ABC News-Washington Post poll](#) released last week showed that 51 percent of women had an unfavorable view of Mrs. Clinton, an increase of 11 percentage points since July, with a particular decline among white women.

In the fractured media landscape, few TV shows deliver the reach of "Ellen," with nearly 55 million adults watching all or part of the show on television or online last year, according to Nielsen. Episodes last season averaged 3.4 million viewers, of whom 73 percent were women who do not typically watch the Sunday morning news programs and can be difficult for elected officials to reach.

"Women have been hearing a lot of unfavorable stuff about emails and the Clintons being secretive," said Susan J. Carroll, a professor of political science and women's and gender studies at Rutgers. Mrs. Clinton, Professor Carroll said, "needs to rebuild trust and show people that she is a real person, in a sense."

Ms. DeGeneres — who will also interview [Malala Yousafzai](#), a young Nobel Peace Prize recipient, between her sit-downs with Ms. Jenner and Mrs. Clinton — can help do that.

Ms. DeGeneres can be wacky and unpredictable with guests, but never meanspirited, her executive producers said in interviews. During Tuesday's taping, she asked Mrs. Clinton what she thought of Kanye West running for president in 2020 ("I would only ask him if I'm running for re-election to wait," she replied) and had a 5-year-old presidential history buff quiz the former first lady, among other antics.

"For a candidate, shows like 'Ellen' can be particularly useful in times when you're getting a bad ride in the traditional press," said Dan Pfeiffer, a longtime aide to President Obama. Mr. Obama has appeared on "Ellen" four times, including dancing his way onto the stage to Beyoncé's "Crazy in Love" in 2007.

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In a 2008 interview with Mrs. Clinton, the comedian flashed an image of the former first lady's head transposed on Madonna's body. "I want to know where you got that picture," Mrs. Clinton said. "We have kept that picture under lock and key in this campaign." Ms. DeGeneres quickly retorted: "I had that at home."

When Michelle Obama was facing pushback from the food industry in 2012 for her [efforts to combat childhood obesity](#), Ms. DeGeneres invited her to a push-up contest, a segment that nearly three million people shared on Twitter.

"She looks for ways to let a candidate really let their personality and their quirks out," Kristina Schake, a former aide to Mrs. Obama and currently the deputy communications director to Mrs. Clinton's campaign, said of Ms. DeGeneres.

Ms. Schake said Ms. DeGeneres's interview was an important part of a broader media plan this fall, including a range of online and nontraditional outlets. "You'll see Hillary doing lots of these kinds of venues so that Americans can get to know her not just as a woman behind a podium," she said.

The show's executive producers said the goal was not to talk about the same things news media discuss. "Ellen doesn't put people into uncomfortable situations," said Ed Glavin, an executive producer on the show. "You can just be silly here."

That does not mean it is an easy appearance. Mr. Pfeiffer said late-night and daytime shows were among the most difficult interviews to prepare for because it was hard to predict what would come up.

The "Ellen" producers had brainstormed ideas with Mrs. Clinton's camp (including blowing up on screen some of the funnier emails released by the State Department) and allowed Mrs. Clinton to talk about her policies, especially those that affect women, like equal pay.

Before the taping, Mary Connelly, an executive producer for the show, said, "I would not expect [Hillary Clinton](#) to dance." But during a commercial break, Mrs. Clinton, onstage with the singer Pink and the comedian Amy Schumer, clapped her hands and swayed her hips, swept up in the silliness of "Ellen."

Correction: September 8, 2015

An earlier version of this article incorrectly attributed a quotation from a Rutgers University professor who explained how Hillary Rodham Clinton "needs to rebuild trust and show people that she is a real person, in a sense." The speaker was Susan J. Carroll, a professor of political science and women's and gender studies at Rutgers, not Debbie Walsh, the director of the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers.