

Hillary Rodham Clinton says her wealth is 'secondary' concern for voters

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Manchester: Hillary Rodham Clinton countered criticism that her personal wealth undermines a populist campaign message focused on the economic problems of everyday Americans, saying on Monday that her family fortune is "secondary" to most voters.

"I don't think Americans are against success," she told reporters in Concord, New Hampshire. "Those of us who do have opportunities ought to be doing more to help other people do the same."

Clinton and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, have made hundreds of millions of dollars since leaving the White House from paid speeches- a fortune that even she has struggled to explain.

Last year, she stumbled into a storm of political criticism after saying her family was "dead broke" at the end of her husband's second term. Though in deep debt due to legal fees from various controversies, Bill Clinton quickly moved the couple into the top 1 percent with book sales and speaking fees while his wife served as a U.S. senator and secretary of state.

Last month, the couple reported that they had earned more than \$30 million in speaking fees and book royalties since January 2014.

In New Hampshire on Monday, Clinton seemed more comfortable acknowledging her wealth, describing her family as "blessed." But she also highlighted her middle class roots, pointing out that both she and her husband had federal college loans to pay off.Â New Hampshire holds the first presidential primary of the campaign season.

Clinton's remarks on Monday came in the midst of a campaign launch focused on her personal biography, particularly her mother's impoverished upbringing, as a way of reintroducing one of the country's best known political figures as a fighter for struggling families left behind by the economic recovery.

On Monday, she focused on the first major policy proposal of her campaign on universal pre-kindergarten education - an issue championed both by liberal voices in her party, as well as by more conservative governors in Republican-led states, including Texas.

That proposal is one item on a wish-list of progressive policies Clinton has backed over the past three days, as part of her vision of a more "inclusive economy."

"Prosperity cannot be just for CEOs and hedge fund managers," she told hundreds of supporters Monday in a barn in Concord, New Hampshire. Those Wall Street financiers include members of her immediate family.

Her son-in-law Marc Mezvinsky has leveraged family ties to raise money from investors for his hedge fund. Her daughter, Chelsea, also worked at a hedge fund founded by a major Clinton campaign donor.

Clinton was paid to speak to financial firms such as Deutsche Bank and Ameriprise Financial.

Republicans have spent months questioning how the Clinton family has leveraged political connections into personal cash- criticism that may be having some impact on early perceptions of her candidacy. About 47 percent of Americans said Clinton cares about people like them in a CNN/ORC poll released earlier this month, down from 53 percent in the

same poll last summer. .

Republicans are flipping charges successfully leveled against their party in the last presidential race. In 2012, Republican nominee Mitt Romney, the wealthy co-founder of private equity firm Bain Capital LLC, found his presidential bid undermined by Democratic attack ads painting him as a heartless plutocrat.

"Hillary Clinton has to expect the same kind of treatment," Romney said Monday, in an interview on MSNBC. "How could she get out there and sell a populist message when she makes in one hour a multiple of what the average American will make in a year?"