

GOOD WORKS

At AOL's New York offices, Gates chats with Dyllan McGee, executive producer of a Makers series video about the philanthropist.



TRACKED

MELINDA GATES

The global philanthropist combines compassion with a belief in data-driven solutions.

BY CHRISTOPHER ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY BY STEPHANIE SINCLAIR

EVEN THE TIGHTLY choreographed pace of a day in the life of Melinda Gates hits a snag once in a while. At the debut of a short biographical film about her, part of the Makers series, at AOL's New York offices this spring, the video began to stutter shortly after starting. For a minute, the crowd sat in awkward silence while garbled audio loudly echoed through the room. After brief deliberations, and as technicians scrambled to fix the problem, Gates calmly strode to the front, where she cut straight to a live Q&A with the video's director that had been planned for after the screening. "I worked in software," she said into her microphone with a smile as she settled in a chair. "I'm used to glitches every now and then."

Gates has proved so adept at playing her role on

the world stage as one of its most powerful philanthropists that it's easy to forget: Achieving global prominence wasn't initially part of her plan. A math and science geek raised in a middle-class family in Dallas, she graduated at the top of her high school class and went on to study computer science and economics at Duke University. She joined Microsoft as an associate product manager and met its enterprising young CEO, Bill Gates, whom she married in 1994. Dedicating herself to raising their three children, she shunned publicity, not consenting to her first major profile until 2008. By then, she had accepted life in the spotlight. As half of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the world's largest private foundation, she's fully committed to the institution's mandate of improving the health of millions and

lifting those in need out of poverty. In recent years, she's made it her personal mission to improve the welfare of women in developing countries through the use of contraceptives and the reduction of maternal and newborn mortality.

Her work sees her shuttling at often surrealistic speed between famine-struck African villages and international halls of wealth and power, hobnobbing with Warren Buffett and Bono at Davos or Bilderberg conferences. With her easy command of statistics and point-proving anecdotes, she can seem like a policy wonk. Yet she remains, at heart, a trained empiricist with a scientist's love of puzzles. In her quest for solutions, she believes the best answer is often the most beautiful one. "You have to be elegant," she says, "in order to be efficient." >

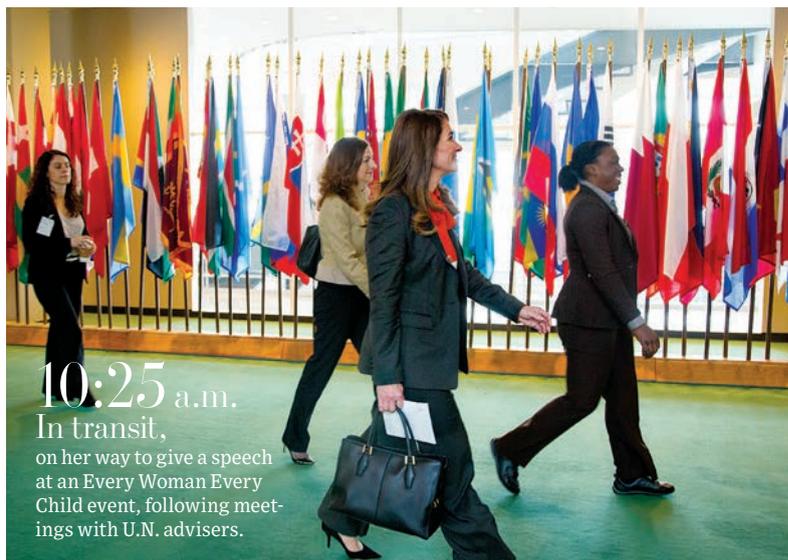


8:29 a.m.
On camera

with CNBC's Becky Quick for *Squawk Box*, Gates discusses women's rights. "Societies thrive when you empower women," she says.

11:06 a.m.
At the U.N.,

greet Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. They often share a stage at conferences.



10:25 a.m.
In transit,

on her way to give a speech at an Every Woman Every Child event, following meetings with U.N. advisers.



2:12 p.m.
Adds signature to the wall at AOL, following the debut of her *Makers* video.

8:02 p.m.
Delivers speech

at the Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality event at the Hammerstein Ballroom. Fellow speakers included Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Hillary Clinton.



4.0

Gates's graduating GPA at her high school, Ursuline Academy of Dallas. She was valedictorian.

50%

Amount the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation wants to reduce child mortality by 2030. One in 20 children around the world dies before age 5; Melinda and Bill believe that number can be cut to one in 40.

0

Apple products

used in the Gates household. They don't plan on getting Apple Watches either.

1,223
employees

at the foundation, drawn from fields including investment banking, foreign health ministries and academia.

3

years

separate the births of each of Gates's three children (Jennifer, 19; Rory, 15; Phoebe, 12), a fact she mentions when emphasizing the importance of family planning.

30

minutes

Amount of time she typically meditates in the morning.

17' 8"

Length of her favorite kayak—a yellow Northwest Kayaks Synergy—which she likes to take out on Washington Lake.

\$43.5 billion

Current endowment of the foundation. All of its money is to be donated 20 years after the last surviving partner dies.

23

years old

Age when Melinda met Bill, who was 31. He asked her on a date five months after she started at Microsoft. ●