

REMARKS BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO AND FBI DIRECTOR LOUIS FREEH  
AT THE WORLD AIDS DAY PROGRAM JUSTICE DEPT WEDNESDAY, DEC. 1, 1993  
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**ATTY GEN. RENO:** Good morning, and welcome to a day of concern, a  
day of hope, a day of caring, World AIDS Day. As President Clinton  
noted, HIV AIDS is the health crisis of this century. It cannot be  
allowed to extend into the next. Only through education and  
prevention can we stop it.

We here in the Department of Justice are sharing today in this  
special moment entitled "A Time to Act." Its purpose is to say that  
we can do something, both personally and professionally, about the  
scourge of AIDS.

With some opening remarks, let me introduce the distinguished  
director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Louis J. Freeh.  
(Applause.)

**MR. FREEH:** Good morning, and thank you, Attorney General Reno,  
for your introduction.

Welcome again to the 1993 World AIDS Day at the Department  
of Justice. It's my privilege and my honor to speak to you on such an  
important and momentous occasion.

All across America today and, indeed, all around the world,  
people are gathering together, as we are, to remember the people who  
have died of AIDS, those who have been stricken by this preventable  
illness, and the caregivers who stand by them. The brutal reality of  
AIDS hits home when someone close and dear to you suffers.

Just a couple of months ago, a very dear friend of mine, Morgan  
Hardiman, who worked for a United States senator, died in a hospice a

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couple of miles from this building. One of the last things he said to me was to do whatever I could to make it known to people how important it was that we take dramatic and personal steps not only to prevent this disease but to give care and understanding and love to its victims and the people who are afflicted with it.

AIDS is more than just a simple personal crisis, it's a national crisis, the national health crisis of the century, and as the theme today and in the coming year will be, it's time to act, it's time to do something.

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In the audience today there are three people who should be recognized publicly for their contribution to AIDS awareness and AIDS education: (Skeeter ?) Buck, Anthony Tierney (sp), and Jeffrey Wooley (sp) of the Names Project Foundation. Through their efforts, the AIDS memorial quilt has grown from a neighborhood cause to an international symbol of love and concern and hope. It has been displayed on the mall here in Washington, in 23 countries around the world, stimulating many local projects and an understanding of the depth of the human situation and suffering resulting from this grave problem. You can see six of the AIDS memorial quilt pattern in this hall today. There are two more across the street in the FBI auditorium, and as you observe them and spend some time with them, they will be very moving. I'm sure, to all of us.

The Department of Justice is taking an active role in educating its employees about HIV and AIDS. Following the presentation this morning, for example, there will be a one-hour educational program to teach you what you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones and to develop the care and understanding, help and love that its victims need. This is the first of a series of AIDS education programs planned for Department of Justice employees. I strongly urge you to support and be involved in these programs.

We are fortunate to have this program led by Janet Reno, an attorney general who has a strong and courageous dedication to law enforcement, to civil rights, and is not afraid of compassion -- a unique combination, a wonderful combination for a public official.

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So I welcome you, I thank you for your support, and urge you to get involved in this most important program.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: Thank you, Director Freeh.

I'd like to add some thoughts. The quiet, every day lives of most Americans revolve around home and work. These are the places that we define ourselves as people. These are the places that give our lives structure and meaning and discipline.

A million of us now live with HIV. These are our family, our friends, our neighbors, our co-workers. For far too long, for far too many people with AIDS, the workplace has not been a place of help and comfort and caring. Instead, vicious stereotypes and blinding ignorance have combined to make work a place of fear for many people with AIDS, and for many years it seemed that almost no one with power and authority seemed to care.

Those days are behind us. This is a new time. We have a new president who is dedicated to fair and equal treatment for all Americans. As President Clinton said so eloquently on November the 13th from a Memphis pulpit, this administration believes in defining values of family and work.

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We want to do everything possible to help all Americans, including people with AIDS, nurture these values, for the importance of work does not diminish simply because a person is ill.

The Clinton administration has made an unprecedented commitment to caring for those with HIV, funding vital research, and the president is dedicated to providing the very best possible medical care. He has asked his cabinet members to share his dedication to this great cause. Today I want to let you know how strongly I feel that we must do everything we can to help those who are now suffering from HIV. And it is so important as I think back to my office in Miami, what a caring, concerned, and loving workplace can do for a person suffering both from AIDS or from other illness. We all, in our workplace, have a responsibility to reach out and care and to treat every person with dignity and respect.

This means heeding the president's call that the federal government demonstrate leadership for AIDS education and prevention. Business and labor leaders have already recognized that they have a vital role to play in bringing AIDS education to the workplace. Partnerships have been formed involving the Centers for Disease Control, the public health communities and concerned organizations along with labor and business. These partnerships will help prevent the spread of HIV through workplace education and community service.

We have in the department an unyielding commitment to the Americans with Disabilities Act. The act stands firmly for the proposition that illness and disability are part of the human experience. They in no way diminish the right of a person to live independently, enjoy full inclusion in all aspects of American society, pursue meaningful careers, and contribute to family and community.

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If we do our jobs here at the Department of Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act will mean a more just, open and dignified society. Our department has already brought two age discrimination cases under the Americans with Disabilities Act. We are now prosecuting dentists in New Orleans and Houston because they refused to treat people with HIV. What these dentists did was wrong. They had no justification for denying this treatment to these patients. There is no reason whatsoever why patients with HIV should not be treated routinely. Unfortunately, prejudice clouded sound medical judgment.

The Justice Department intends to remove this cloud and reveal the facts. We are aggressively pursuing other such cases of discrimination around the country. We are determined to strip away ignorance and prejudice -- by education if we can, by litigation if we must.

Today you will hear some remarkable stories, stories of courage and determination, from a Department of Justice employee with AIDS, stories of sacrifice and compassion from a federal employee who cares for people with AIDS. These are the stories of real Americans, of caring, wonderful people. The America of good heart. The America symbolized by the Names Project quilts that hang today in this great hall.

This is the America that must inspire us all to do better, to wipe away fears and prejudice, to open our arms to people just like us who have had a bad break in life.

At the department we are prepared to work with businesses large and small and with government, state and local, to guarantee all Americans free and equal treatment under the law. This administration is determined to open doors of opportunity to people with AIDS. We want to work cooperatively to open those doors. I'm confident that our approach of partnership and education can work. I want to believe that once facts are made known, most Americans will agree that not even one of us should be left out just because we're sick. Where cooperation fails, though, the department is prepared to kick down the door with firm, fair enforcement actions. No American, including those with AIDS, should be made to suffer discrimination in the workplace or in the doctor's office. We at the department want to stand ready to turn this promise of fair and equal treatment into a reality.

I am honored to participate in World AIDS Day. I believe this day will help spread the word across this country that the days of fear and prejudice are ending. We're determined to begin a new time

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of caring and tolerance and understanding for all Americans. I am proud to be part of the Clinton administration's efforts.

Now it is my privilege to introduce a very special person to you, a registered nurse by profession, Kristine Gebbie. Ms. Gebbie is President Clinton's national AIDS policy coordinator. Before that, she was secretary of health in Washington state and was a member of the first presidential commission on AIDS. She also chaired the advisory committee on the prevention of HIV infection of the Centers for Disease Control.

Ms. Gebbie?

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MS. GEBBIE: (Applause.) Thank you very much. It's indeed a privilege and pleasure to be here this morning and to participate in this first of many events on and around the Mall recognizing World AIDS Day, a Time to Act.

I've had the extraordinary privilege in the last four months to represent the president in his commitment to make this nation's response effective and to bring this epidemic to a halt -- we don't know when, but as soon as we can. In doing that, I have heard stories from people living with this disease from their families, from neighborhood folks and policymakers all across the country that just underscore for me why we need to act. I'd like to reflect with you on what I think it takes for that action, and that is courage:

The courage it takes for an individual to decide for the first time to find out whether he or she is infected with this virus, to come face to face with that fact of life or a potential early death;

The courage it takes to stand up to a family member or a co-worker and say, "I have this virus and I'm living with it, with all of the fears of what that might bring;"

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The courage it takes for a family to say, "We have a son, a daughter, a niece, a nephew, a parent with this disease, and we care, and we're going to stand here proudly with that person;"

The courage it takes for a neighborhood to say, "We not only don't care, we want an AIDS hospice in our neighborhood because we need that service here;"

The courage it takes for a parent to look a 13-year-old in the eye and say, "We're really going to talk about sex and AIDS and drugs and life and death;"

The courage it takes for a school board to make the decision to have a comprehensive education program;

The courage it takes for a minister or rabbi to say, "Our congregation is going to do a series of education programs on this epidemic, and we're not afraid to talk about it;"

The courage it took for the first people to start making these quilts that hang all across the country with names on them of real people who have struggled with this disease who aren't with us now but are a reminder of where we need to go so we don't end up with a quilt big enough to blanket the whole nation before we're done.

I start running out of words; not because there aren't words, but because behind all the words have to come emotion. We're in a department that I think takes pride in its analytic skills, its legal argument skills, its disciplined approach to things, but the action we're calling about here takes caring but comes from inside and that you're here today, that your listening and participating is a wonderful first step.

My challenge to you is to remember to add some action tomorrow and the next day and the day after so that your actions join with those of all of us across this country acting as fast as we can to stop this epidemic.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: Gerald Roemer is a Department of Justice attorney living with HIV. He is one of us. He became an attorney in the Office of Information and Privacy under the attorney general's honor program after graduating a year ago from George Mason University Law School.

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He is also a volunteer attorney for the Whitman Walker Clinic of Northern Virginia.

Mr. Roemer?

GERALD ROEMER (Justice Department attorney): Thank you, Ms. Reno, for that kind introduction. I'm here today as just another Department of Justice employee, but one living with HIV. Now, there's over one million people in this country who have HIV. Statistically, that's one out of every 250 people. If you do the math for the Department of Justice, that means there are over 300 Department of Justice employees who have HIV or AIDS, and I'm just one of those people, several of which are probably also here in the audience today.

In one aspect, these numbers shouldn't surprise you. AIDS has become a plague, a pandemic. It's just not limited to one minority group -- "those gays" or "them drug users" -- but it's now a disease that touches our entire nation's, our entire world's social fabric. It reaches out and touches everyone.

Now, perhaps you're lucky enough to think, "Well, I really don't know anyone else with HIV." I ask you: Do you? People living with HIV often protect this information from their family, their close friends and their co-workers. They do this to protect themselves -- from fear of being rejected, from the loss of a job, the loss of their health insurance. People living with HIV don't always necessarily look sick. I tested HIV positive over six years ago, and the disease has basically wiped out my immune system. I have the clinical definition of AIDS, an acquired immune deficiency; yet, if I pass you in the hall, you may just think, "There's another Department of Justice attorney."

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In 1987 when I tested positive, I was a college senior. When I got those test results, I realized I wasn't going to be invincible anymore, but I decided I was going to survive. I finished college, started to apply to law school, went to law school at night, worked days at several jobs, and eventually came here to the Department of Justice, and my experiences here at Justice have been both rewarding and challenging. This is the first workplace that I've been at where I've shared my HIV diagnosis. My co-workers have been cooperative and supportive. My bosses have been accommodating for any leave I may need, and we've even made plans for any special accommodations I might need if I get more ill.

One thing I wanted to let you know is that -- and you may already know -- is the president has asked that every federal employee receive training about HIV and AIDS in the next year. When you go to these training sessions, I want you to remember that I'm just one of over 300 DOJ employees with HIV. We may be your secretaries or your supervisor. I'm the person you work out with in the gym, stand in line with in the cafeteria, see in the library, go to training sessions with. We really are in all aspects of this department.

And I want you to know that with your commitment and with your willingness to act and with your ability to educate yourselves, we're going to be able to break this pandemic. We're going to be able to end this plague. With your prayers, we're going to stop sewing quilt patches for our fellow employees, for our friends. I want you to know that a time to act is now.

Thank you. (Applause.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: Our next speaker, Kim Black, has worked at the Library of Congress for 21 years, currently in the copyright office. She is also a volunteer in the DC Whitman-Walker Clinic. She does seminars on HIV and AIDS for federal and local government agencies, corporations, schools, churches and other community-based organizations.

Ms. Black?

KIM BLACK (Whitman Walker Clinic volunteer): Good morning, and thank you for inviting me to speak on this very important occasion. Excuse me if I get a little emotional.

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It's just seeing all these panels behind me remind me of people who have died, friends that I've lost, friends that I know that are sick and dying, so it gets a little emotional. But this is about emotions and caring about people.

If someone had told me 10 years ago that my brother Benjamin would have died of AIDS complications when he turned 24 years old, I would have called that person a liar, but that's just what happened. He died on July 12, 1991, at Howard University Hospital. In fact, when my brother told me in 1985 that he was HIV positive, I was ignorant as to what that meant. Can you believe that? It's not that the information wasn't available, but people didn't want to talk about HIV, AIDS or death, and to a large extent they still don't, but we must.

My brother may have been gay, but this is a disease that does not discriminate. We cannot turn a blind eye to HIV and AIDS. After all, we live in a world where a person can travel hundreds, thousands of miles in a matter of hours. Where people go, so does HIV.

So, what do we do about it? One thing we can do is volunteer our time to HIV AIDS service organizations and to help start meaningful and constructive dialogues about HIV and AIDS at work, in our communities, with our friends, in our homes. I cared for my brother when he was ill, and the courage he displayed has given me the strength and desire to help others who are living with HIV and AIDS.

In addition to donating our time, talent and treasure to these organizations, we can take the message of these ribbons that we're wearing today, these red ribbons. This is the symbol of the struggle, and put it into practice not just on World AIDS Day but throughout the year. I invite you to draw on the experiences of organizations like the Whitman-Walker Clinic, where I volunteer. The stories you will hear and, if you choose to join us, the ones you will live are truly inspiring and life affirming.

We must go beyond the fear, the denial, the stereotypes, the prejudice and the judging. The judging only helps to kill our loved ones. HIV is not the only sexually-transmitted disease, and it surely won't be the last. It's the only one for which there is no cure. But education is our strongest weapon.

The mere thought of this whole thing sometimes is so perplexing and so overwhelming that people really get discouraged, and I hear people say that all the time. They feel that there's nothing we can do.  
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But the Ethiopian proverb that I also remind myself of and which I'd like to share with you goes this way. It says: When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion. If we are the spider webs, let HIV be the lion. I pray that we can eradicate HIV, but even before that happens, we sure can get it under control.

For me, Anne Frank put it very eloquently: "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." I ask you to make your choice today, right now. Remember, silence equals death.

Thank you. (Applause.)

ATTY GEN. REND: Some very caring country music stars have organized and inaugurated the Country AIDS Awareness Campaign, and they are here today to join with us, which I think is a very special effort, and I want to thank you all. (Applause.) Mark Chestnut (sp), the owner of two gold albums and five number one singles; Jimmy Olander (sp) and Marty Rowe (sp) from Diamond Rio, the Country Music Association's top vocal group for 1992 and 1993, and the first group in history to reach number one with their debut single; and finally, although Mary Chapin Carpenter could not be here this morning because of illness, her manager, John Simpson, has asked to say a few words. So I would call each one of you, one by one. First Mark, then Jimmy and Marty, and then John.

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MARK CHESTNUT (Country music performer): (Applause.) Thanks. This town is very famous for its famous speakers, and I'm not one of them. (Laughter.) So you'll find that out real quick.

And that's the reason I'm here, is because I am a -- I'm a country singer, and I see different people than you'all see every day, you know. We play a lot of big dance halls and honky-tonks, you know, and we're singing to people who are not getting the message, you know. They don't think we have a big problem. And what I'm here to do, along with other country artists -- there's about 46 of us who are getting together to let everybody know that we do have a problem here because it seems like everybody living down south, you know, out in the woods in these small little towns, they don't have MTV and a lot of them don't have cable TV. Don't even know what satellites are, some of them. And it's funny, but it's true. And they think that AIDS is a big-city problem or it's a problem -- you know, you don't have to worry about it if you don't do drugs or if you're not gay. And that's just not true.

And that's the only thing I can say, is that we've got to tell people that is a big problem because it's growing real fast in rural areas, faster than it is in the big cities right now. So I figure if we can talk about it, tell them -- you know, they'll listen to us. These good old boys and good old girls going dancing every night, you know, hard-working people, they like to have a lot of fun. We just want to tell them to be careful when they're having a lot of fun because that's the only way we can stop this problem, to just let them know there is a big problem, and it's a very big problem in the country just as much as it is in the big cities.

I want to thank y'all, thank Janet Reno for having us out here just so we can let y'all know that we are going to try to do our part to let everybody know and make somebody listen. Thanks. (Applause.)

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JIMMY DLANDER (sp): As a representative of country music, I would like to tell you that country cares about AIDS. Our music is about real life, and the HIV virus and AIDS is real life for a portion of people in this nation and growing stronger each day. So now is the time for us to act, and that's why we're here.

We would like to encourage each and every one of you today to do your part in educating others about prevention. Now, this can be simple. Let's take, for instance, a grassroots approach to this. If we all leave today with the education that we're learning, and talk to somebody, just talk to one person, through that we can double the awareness already. And if you can instill in them to do what you have done, then hopefully we can get the snowball effect of education to work for us. We've heard some statistics today and we can kind of see where we stand now. And we need to get the numbers of education and prevention to surpass the numbers of infection. And through that, I think together that we can make a difference. (Applause.)

MARTY ROWE (sp): Well, like Mark and Jimmy and about 44 other artists in country music, we are honored to do whatever our part in this effort. I come as a representative of country music, but I also come as a concerned parent, and as parents, we must act now to take the responsibility of educating our children and our grandchildren about the avenues that are available to them for the prevention of this disease. By giving them the facts about prevention, we will at least help to ensure their future.

Our hope is to look forward here, I think, and not backward. Our hearts go out to those already infected with HIV and with AIDS; our prayer is for a cure. But as responsible parents, through education we can prevent this disease from spreading to our future generations.

Thank you. (Applause.)

JOHN SIMPSON: Mary Chapin asked me to come today because she was extremely disappointed that she couldn't be here. This issue is very important to her, and that's why she's co-chairing with Mark Chestnut the Country AIDS Awareness Campaign.

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She asked if I would pass along just one anecdote, which concerned a corporate health fair which recently took place. There was an AIDS booth and people were avoiding it -- no one was going there -- until the people in the booth decided to put up a sign. And the sign said, "We will teach you how to talk to your children about AIDS." And immediately they had a line -- a long line.

And I think it meant a lot to Mary Chapin because education is so important to her and education is the key to solving and preventing AIDS and HIV, teaching parents what to say to their children. If you have trouble communicating with your children, there are many resources where you can turn to. And that's what you need to do you need to talk to your kids. You need to -- because knowing the facts can make a difference. You need to teach them compassion and the steps they need to take to prevent this disease.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

ATTY GEN. RENO: Thank you so very much for being here, for sharing, and for caring with us all about all Americans.

Stan Killingsworth, a musician and song writer for 25 years, distinguished himself through his song, "Special Love," for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Now, his latest song, "Miracle of Love," is his special contribution to the AIDS prevention program. He will be backed by the gospel choir from Saint Augustine Catholic Church, under the direction of Leon C. Roberts. The lyrics to the song are on the back of your program, and we urge you to join with us. The choir, also, would like to perform a second song in honor of one of their choir members who died last year of AS.

We thank you and we welcome you. Mr. Killingsworth, thank you so much for sharing with us.

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ATTY GEN. RENO: Mr. Killingsworth (sp), thank you very much.  
That was just beautiful.

And to the choir, we thank you. (Applause.) And to the choir,  
that was just magnificent. Thank you, Mr. Roberts and all the members  
of the choir.

Thank you for being here today. Thank you who are watching  
throughout America for joining us. But let us go forth today,  
resolved that today and each step of the way, from now on, we're going  
to reach out more so than we have done before to care about others who  
have HIV, that we are going to do everything we can to make sure that  
education and prevention is provided to all Americans so that we won't  
see this disease in the next century.

Director Freeh has asked to close the program, and I welcome him  
again. (Applause.)

JUDGE FREEH: I want to, again, thank you all for your  
commitment, for your participation, for your interest here. We're  
lawyers, we're investigators in the Department of Justice. We're also  
part of the human family. We have the spiritual and the physical  
strength to overcome this problem, to make a difference. And, as our  
motto for today is, it's time to act. This doesn't end our program;  
it begins our program.

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