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SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAM

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

JANUARY 13, 1994

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

GREAT HALL

10th AND CONSTITUTION AVENUE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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1 MR. MCBURROWS: Would you join me in a round of
2 applause for the services of the R.O.T.C. Color Guard of
3 Spingarn High School?

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. MCBURROWS: And providing interpretative
6 services for our program today for our hearing-impaired
7 employees is Ms. Janice Welburn.

8 Attorney General Reno, Deputy Attorney General,
9 Mr. Heymann, Dr. Brown, Ms. Townsend, ladies and
10 gentlemen, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you again
11 to this program to commemorate the birthday of a great
12 American hero, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

13 The Department has sponsored programs
14 commemorating Dr. King's birthday annually since 1979,
15 well before this day was set aside as a national holiday
16 in 1983.

17 I'd also like to welcome all of the persons who
18 are watching this through the closed-circuit viewing, at
19 various locations throughout the department. That was
20 done because of the overflow crowd that we know we
21 normally have for this special occasion.

22 We have today a very exciting and fitting
23 tribute to Dr. King. I'd like to thank all of our program
24 participants and all of you for taking time from your
25 schedules to be here with us.

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1 To begin the program, I'd like to present our
2 first speaker. Would you join me in welcoming the Deputy
3 Attorney General, Mr. Philip Heymann.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. HEYMANN: I don't feel like I'm here as the
6 Deputy Attorney General, I feel like I'm here as someone
7 who was in the Department of Justice in the days when
8 Martin Luther King was streaking across the sky and
9 changing everything, and I want to describe to you what it
10 felt like in those days.

11 I was a young lawyer in the Department of
12 Justice in the early 1960s when Martin Luther King came
13 upon the scene and reshaped America. At the risk of
14 telling again an already often-told story, let me describe
15 for just a few minutes what it was like.

16 Since Brown versus Board of Education, in 1954,
17 the Supreme Court had been leading the country, a country
18 which had for shameless decades segregated, discriminated,
19 openly, legally, forcefully by state, since 1954, the
20 Supreme Court had been leading us down the path of
21 desegregation for many of those years, between 1954 and
22 the early sixties, without any great enthusiasm from the
23 president or the Congress.

24 That changed with the coming to office of Jack
25 Kennedy and the appointment of Robert Kennedy as attorney

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1 general.

2 Suddenly, in 1961, the Department of Justice was
3 fighting for the equal rights of African-Americans, by
4 bringing lawsuits throughout the south, most dramatically
5 against the governors of Mississippi and Alabama.

6 I can remember the efforts of dedicated and
7 creative lawyers, not only to bring the hundreds of cases
8 that had to be brought in every small town and every large
9 city in the south at that time, but also their efforts to
10 stretch the Constitution, to stretch the concept of what
11 the Constitution forbids, to reach actions that weren't
12 actions by the states, but were actions by private people
13 who ran bus companies, or lunch counters, or something
14 else, the efforts that start to chip away at the huge body
15 of discriminatory, biased, prejudiced custom that shaped
16 many of our practices and institutions. But you can only
17 get so far by trying to stretch the Constitution, and use
18 the courts.

19 Then along came Martin Luther King, inviting
20 African-Americans to refuse to play their assigned
21 inferior role in customary structures.

22 His was a moral argument that went directly to
23 the hypocrisy of legal segregation, and paid little
24 attention to whether it was forbidden by the Constitution,
25 whether it was enforced by Jim Crowe, segregation laws, or

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1 were simply traceable to custom and private prejudice.

2 He just raised the moral issue by refusing to
3 comply, refusing to play the inferior role we had been
4 assigning to African-Americans.

5 This took immense courage in the early sixties.
6 We're likely to forget it. Refusing to recognize the
7 legitimacy of even private bias in buses or lunch counters
8 was a major challenge at a time when notions of private
9 property seemed threatened by efforts to desegregate and
10 attack our prejudices.

11 Beyond that, Martin Luther King was urging
12 violations of the law, sitting at lunch counters after
13 being asked to leave, in the name of the most fundamental
14 principles of fairness and morality.

15 This wasn't easy for the Department of Justice
16 to digest, violating the law in the name of fairness. But
17 the violation took a special form.

18 It was non-violent and open, accepting whatever
19 punishment came under unjust laws. There's a very famous
20 moment in that history, when Attorney General Robert
21 Kennedy communicates with Martin Luther King, who is in
22 prison for standing against unjust laws.

23 Martin Luther King was committed to conducting
24 the struggle for equality on what he called, "The high
25 plane of dignity and discipline." He cautioned those he

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1 led not to, "Allow our creative protests to degenerate
2 into physical violence."

3 Martin Luther King knew how to speak to the
4 conscious of white America, by making extraordinary
5 demands on the courage, and steadfastness, and nobility of
6 black Americans.

7 His voice was like Joshua's trumpet, and the
8 walls came tumbling down, most dramatically with the
9 passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, his
10 Acts.

11 He knew that there were other walls behind the
12 walls of open discrimination, and he was attacking those
13 when he was murdered.

14 He was murdered because he was a danger. He was
15 a danger, because he forced us, through words of non-
16 violence and fundamental fairness, to face head-on the
17 contradiction between what we were and what the
18 Declaration of Independence said we meant to be, all men
19 are created equal.

20 Dr. King forced us to bring law in line with
21 justice, rather than allow us to bring our morality down
22 to the then prevailing law. Thank you.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. MCBURROWS: I'd like to thank Mr. Heymann
25 for his remarks and for his being here in the program

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1 today.

2 Our next speaker, Ms. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend,
3 is one of the newest members of the Department senior
4 management team. She presently serves as the Deputy
5 Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice
6 Programs.

7 Prior to joining the Department, Ms. Townsend
8 had a distinguished career both in the legal field and in
9 community service.

10 She's a founder of the Robert F. Kennedy Human
11 Rights Award, and has served as Chair of the Robert F
12 Kennedy Memorial, in honor of her father, the former
13 attorney general. I am pleased to introduce Ms. Kathleen
14 Kennedy Townsend.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. TOWNSEND: Thank you very much. I'm
17 delighted to be here today, and I'm especially pleased
18 that my mother, Mrs. Robert Kennedy, joined us --

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. TOWNSEND: -- as well as, I have to admit,
21 my cousin, from Ireland, Father Michael Kennedy.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. TOWNSEND: I must admit that I was thrilled
24 when Ted McBurrows asked me to speak today. After all,
25 Martin Luther King may have been responsible for getting

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1 my father to the Justice Department.

2 I know that we all like to believe that we get
3 here on merit, but in the case of two people I know, I
4 must admit, politics plays a role.

5 (Applause.)

6 MS. TOWNSEND: There are many theories on how
7 John Kennedy won the 1960 election. Some point to the
8 stellar performance in the Kennedy-Nixon debates. Others
9 credit Dick Daley.

10 Many others, however, look to the time when
11 Martin Luther King was sentenced to four months of hard
12 labor for violating probation. After that, John Kennedy
13 called Coretta Scott King, and my father telephoned the
14 judge.

15 I'm sorry to report that Martin Luther King was
16 not moved by these actions. He said, "There are moments
17 when the political expedient is the morally wise," and
18 declined to endorse my uncle.

19 Luckily, however, his own father, Martin Luther
20 King, Sr., took another approach. He said, "I'll take a
21 Catholic or the devil himself if he'll wipe tears from my
22 daughter-in-law's eyes. I've got a suitcase full of
23 votes, my whole church, for Senator Kennedy."

24 It was great that he produced the votes. Still,
25 it is interesting that he had been reluctant to vote for a

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1 Catholic.

2 John Kennedy later remarked, "That was a hell of
3 a bigoted statement. Can you imagine Martin Luther King
4 having a bigot for a father? Well, I guess," he said, "we
5 all have fathers," referring to my grandfather.

6 I think that towards the end of their lives
7 Martin Luther King and my father grew close together.
8 They understood that the Vietnam War was wrong. They were
9 devoted to the question of discrimination in the north,
10 and the seemingly intractable problems of urban poverty.

11 One of the best speeches my father ever gave was
12 the day after Martin Luther King died. He said, "Violence
13 goes on and on. Why? What has violence ever
14 accomplished? What has it ever created? No martyr's
15 cause has ever been stilled by the assassin's bullet, yet
16 we seem to be growing inured to violence."

17 "We glorify killing on movie and television
18 screens, and call it entertainment. We make it easier for
19 men of all shades of sanity to acquire weapons and
20 ammunition they desire. Violence breeds violence.
21 Repression breeds retaliation. And only a cleaning of our
22 whole society will remove this sickness from our soul."

23 He said, "What we need in this country is not
24 division. What we need in this country is not hatred.
25 What we need is not violence or lawlessness, but love and

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1 wisdom, in compassion towards one another, and a feeling
2 of justice for those who still suffer in our country,
3 whether they be white, or they be black."

4 But when he was the attorney general, the
5 relationship between my father and Martin Luther King was
6 filled with tension. This was true, despite the fact that
7 since inauguration day the Justice Department had in place
8 an assistant attorney general for civil rights.

9 Martin Luther King felt that the attorney
10 general could do a lot better and a lot more for civil
11 rights. He thought the administration could be more
12 forceful in education, and transportation, and housing.

13 My father, on the other hand, thought the public
14 was not ready, and that Congress would be opposed. As my
15 mother pointed out to me just yesterday, every major
16 committee was chaired by a segregationist southerner.

17 Despite these different stances, they shared a
18 lot. They were engaged, they struggled together. Martin
19 Luther King would march, and protest, and be jailed.

20 The Justice Department tirelessly negotiated
21 with governors, police chiefs, army officials, freedom
22 fighters, ministers. They were really interested in what
23 actions they could take, what the law required, what was
24 feasible, what was right.

25 My father thought it best to concentrate on

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1 voting rights. The vote seemed to be more defensible than
2 other issues. It was easy to understand and consistent
3 with democratic principles. While they both spoke well,
4 they were not interested in mere rhetoric proposturing .

5 After one particularly good speech that received
6 lots of applause and plaudits, my father said, "That was
7 the easy part. The tough part comes now, keeping our
8 promises, taking action." The administration tried to get
9 a housing bill passed in 1962, but no one was paying
10 attention.

11 The public only became interested in civil
12 rights after seeing the graphic pictures of Martin Luther
13 King and his followers being ruthlessly assaulted,
14 children being hosed down, vicious dogs sent to attack.

15 This then is the great dilemma. The Justice
16 Department needed Martin Luther King to get he Civil
17 Rights Bill passed and the Voting Rights Bill enacted.

18 Each of us here today wishes to stem the tide of
19 violence and wrongdoing. But the story of Martin Luther
20 King reminds us of the lawyers' limits.

21 Even the appointment of an assistant attorney
22 general for civil rights will not suddenly create the
23 moral and political will needed to pass the laws that may
24 be required to push the civil rights agenda to the next
25 stage.

1 Is the unequal funding of schools fair? Do you
2 have a right to a good education? Do you have a right to
3 be safe?

4 So we need that moral force, the man who
5 dedicates his life to love and justice. I believe the
6 Justice Department, particularly, appreciates what Martin
7 Luther King did for our country, for he helped us not only
8 to realize our political ideal, but gave us the courage to
9 discharge our moral obligation.

10 I've also been asked to introduce Janet Reno,
11 and I must admit, it's a real pleasure. She is a good and
12 competent attorney.

13 She, of course, has an excellent choice in
14 staff, particularly deputy assistant attorney general.
15 (Laughter.) But what I really appreciate of her is her
16 understanding of the need to speak out.

17 We need to be alert, to pay attention to
18 children, and to create communities that care. As Martin
19 Luther King realized by his choice of what to do with his
20 life, the law can't solve anything.

21 We need a voice that says what is right, what is
22 wrong, and gives us the courage to go and follow those
23 paths. That's what Janet Reno has done as attorney
24 general, and I think we're all lucky to have her.

25 (Applause.)

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1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much
2 Dr. Brown. Mrs. Kennedy, welcome. It is a great honor
3 for all of us to have you here today.

4 There is on the east wall of the Justice
5 building, on the Ninth Avenue side, a statement on the
6 stone, down the length of the building, that says, "The
7 common law issues from the people. It is derived from the
8 will of mankind. It is framed by mutual confidence. And
9 it is sanctioned by the light of reason."

10 It issues from the people. And lawyers have a
11 responsibility to reach out and work with others, work
12 with ministers, work with social workers, work with
13 physicians, work with every single person in America to
14 put people first.

15 In February, it will be a year that I stood in
16 the Rose Garden and said that that was what I wanted to
17 try to do.

18 In these months that have come since, it has
19 been an extraordinary opportunity for me to serve this
20 nation, to walk in the footsteps of Robert Kennedy, to
21 walk down the mall with Mrs. King, the 30th anniversary,
22 to feel the march of history around us.

23 Yes, to speak out is important, but what we
24 should do on this anniversary is to say that we're not
25 just going to talk, we're going to do something about

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1 violence in America.

2 We are going to do something about giving our
3 children an opportunity to grow as strong, constructive
4 human beings, with the sense that there's a light at the
5 end of the tunnel, that there is a future, and that if
6 they work hard enough, and do the right thing, and
7 prepare, they can be anything they want to be, if it's the
8 right thing to do.

9 (Applause.)

10 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: One of my first
11 occasions in this hall was at a ceremony for volunteers
12 that our marshal service and others had helped to
13 organize.

14 They brought youngsters from schools around the
15 District, who were participating with the marshals in a
16 mentoring program, and then I went out to their schools.

17 I went to a school in Anacostia, where the young
18 man at the door greeted me, as the host, and I said, "What
19 do you want to be when you grow up?" And he said, "I want
20 to be a marine biologist."

21 I said, "How did you get interested in marine
22 biology?" And he said, "The marshals brought a marine
23 biologist to our school, and it was so exciting and so
24 interesting that I got really interested in being a marine
25 biologist."

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1 Each one of us can make a difference, not just
2 by speaking out, but by reaching out and walking out into
3 our communities around this nation, in Anacostia, in
4 Virginia, in Maryland, everywhere we can make a
5 difference.

6 If every single person in the Department of
7 Justice adopted, or became a tutor for, or a mentor to one
8 young person, think of the difference that we could make.

9 There is a tendency in this Beltway, and,
10 indeed, in this building, to think about laws, to think
11 about process, to think about what bill you're going to
12 get passed, to think about how many amendments you're
13 going to let onto this bill, and what's happening with the
14 final pass back with appropriation, and what's this going
15 to do in terms of downsizing.

16 And people forget in Washington about the people
17 of America, and what it is like to live in difficult
18 circumstances, with substandard housing, with violence
19 around them, with drugs around them. We have got to reach
20 out and remember what it is like to be a person who is
21 struggling to live, struggling to be somebody.

22 (Applause.)

23 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I come from a community
24 1,000 miles away, where I walked the streets of my
25 community, where I went places, and saw things that needed

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1 to be seen to understand what people were having to cope
2 with. When I became attorney general, I continued to try
3 to go to communities around the nation, to see the
4 problems in different communities.

5 In November and December, I was sticking close
6 to home, because legislation was pending, and things were
7 happening, and I went out to Anacostia the other night to
8 Larry King and his Larry King Live Program, in that
9 beautiful church of St. Teresa of Avila, and people got up
10 and said, "You haven't been out here, you haven't seen
11 what it's like. You don't understand."

12 It renewed my commitment to go out, to
13 understand, and to try with all my heart and soul to make
14 a personal difference, and then come back and try to
15 translate the programs of the Department of Justice into
16 programs that make sense, and to law enforcement that's
17 fair, that's firm, that does not discriminate, that is not
18 harsh and oppressive, that is understanding, and to
19 programs through our Office of Justice Programs that reach
20 out to youngsters through weed-and-seeds, through juvenile
21 delinquency prevention programs, that give our youngsters
22 a chance to grow as strong, constructive human beings.

23 (Applause.)

24 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: All of us in the
25 Department of Justice, all of us who care about this land

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1 should use the occasion of Dr. King's anniversary to say,
2 "Dr. King, we're going to carry on for you, for Robert
3 Kennedy, for the people who have come before, to make a
4 difference in America. We can do it."

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. MCBURROWS: Thank you very much Attorney
7 General Reno for those very sparing and inspirational
8 remarks. It is now my pleasure to introduce our next
9 speaker and our special guest speaker, Dr. Lee Brown,
10 Director of National Drug Control Policy.

11 Dr. Brown is one of the outstanding individuals
12 in American law enforcement today. Prior to his present
13 appointment, he has served as the chief law enforcement
14 officer in some of the major communities in our nation,
15 including New York City, Atlanta, Georgia, and Houston,
16 Texas.

17 Dr. Brown, in addition to his activities as a
18 law enforcement official, is also a noted criminologist
19 and academician. He has taught at Howard University,
20 Texas Southern University, and Portland State University.

21 Would you join me in a round of applause for Dr.
22 Lee Brown, please?

23 (Applause.)

24 DR. BROWN: Thank you. Attorney General Reno,
25 Mrs. Kennedy, ladies and gentlemen, let me begin by

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1 expressing my sincere appreciation to Attorney General
2 Reno for extending to me the kind invitation to be your
3 speaker here today in celebration of the birth of Dr.
4 Martin Luther King, Jr.

5 Attorney General Reno is someone for whom I have
6 growing respect and admiration. She extended to me the
7 honor of speaking in this great Hall of Justice, not
8 because I lived in Atlanta, not because I know the King
9 family, not because I am the same complexion as Dr. King,
10 but because I am on the same wavelength as Attorney
11 General Reno.

12 Now, this is an important fact, because Attorney
13 General Reno recognizes, as I do, that Dr King's birthday
14 is not an African-American holiday. It is an American
15 holiday.

16 (Applause.)

17 DR. BROWN: Dr. King has the distinction of
18 being one of only two Americans honored with having a
19 national holiday named after them, a holiday that is
20 celebrated in all states.

21 And so I am privileged to be able to speak in
22 this great Hall of Justice, not only because of Dr. King,
23 but also because Attorney General Reno lives by the same
24 principles for which Dr. King died.

25 Birthdays are times for celebration and

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1 remembrance. For most of us, looking backward as each
2 year passes is simply in the natural order of things. It
3 is, if you would, a right, that gives us an opportunity to
4 take stock, to see where we are, to see where we are
5 going.

6 It is with this idea in mind that we should
7 approach the observance of the birthday of Dr. Martin
8 Luther King, Jr. Setting aside his birthday as a national
9 holiday gives all Americans a chance to look back at the
10 man and the measure of his life.

11 And if we're lucky, this annual reminiscence
12 about Dr King's life will enrich our own lives with a
13 sense of purpose that was so resolutely a part of his.

14 Had he lived, Martin Luther King, Jr , would
15 have been 65 years old this Saturday, January 15th. One
16 can only imagine what kind of elder statesman he would
17 have been today.

18 I believe he would still be the drum major for
19 change, the drum major for justice. I believe that his
20 voice would still be among the loudest, urging us to go
21 forward, to complete the work begun so many years ago.

22 I believe that vibrant countenance and steely
23 resolve would have kept him in the forefront of American
24 life, beseeching us all to do the right thing.

25 As we rush today to make heroes of almost anyone

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1 who can command his or her 15 minutes of fame, I wonder
2 why it should be only at this time of the year that we
3 think of this genuine hero, who committed every day of his
4 life to the improvement of the quality of life for
5 everyone.

6 When he was struck down in Memphis in 1968, Dr.
7 King was 39 years of age, and what a lot of living he had
8 crammed into these years.

9 He had led marches all over this country, had
10 been honored with the Nobel Peace Prize, was busy getting
11 ready for yet another initiative aimed at the eradication
12 of poverty, and what would become the poor peoples'
13 campaign.

14 What he could have accomplished had he been
15 allowed to go on is anyone's guess. I think we know
16 enough about this man to know that he would be saddened by
17 some of the conditions we face today. And while much has
18 changed since he left us, far, far too much has remained
19 the same.

20 For example, would he be surprised at the
21 struggles about racism, discrimination, poverty, and
22 crime? I wonder what would he say?

23 What would he say about the fact that one-third
24 of the poor and the underclass in our urban centers are
25 African-Americans?

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1 What would he say about the fact that homicide
2 is the leading cause of death for African-American males
3 between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, and that a
4 black baby born this year has one chance in twenty-seven
5 of death by homicide?

6 What would he say about the persistence of hard-
7 core drug use among our youth? And what would he say
8 about the general decline of our communities and the
9 breakdown of the American family?

10 Now, I did not know Dr. King personally, but
11 studying his life and his words tells me one thing for
12 certain. He would say that we are not finished with the
13 work he began.

14 He would say that there's no time to rest, that
15 we have to keep going. He would say that his struggles in
16 the fifties and his struggles in the sixties were no less
17 daunting than the social and economic problems we face
18 today, because in both cases, then and now, our very lives
19 are at stake.

20 Dr. King faced a crossroads in 1955. The choice
21 was either to fight racial injustice or perhaps accept a
22 primitive seat on the back of the bus for his people.

23 Today, we too have a choice, we can determine to
24 rid ourselves of the forces within our communities that
25 threaten life as we know it, or we can accept an America

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1 shaped by fear and moral ambiguities.

2 Dr. King once said that the ultimate measure of
3 a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and
4 convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and
5 controversy.

6 Believe me, ladies and gentlemen, these are
7 times of great challenge and controversy. And if
8 imitation is the greatest form of flattery, Martin Luther
9 King left us an awesome legacy that is there for us to
10 imitate, if only we would.

11 His example is as meaningful today as it was 30
12 years ago. There are powerful lessons in the story of Dr.
13 Martin Luther King, Jr., lessons that could support,
14 lessons that could guide us toward a brighter future. All
15 we have to do is to look closely at the work he
16 accomplished, and the words he left, because the messages
17 are quite clear.

18 Perhaps Dr. King's most powerful example was his
19 relentless dedication to hard work. No matter what the
20 adversity, he was unwilling to quit.

21 Some of us will remember seeing Dr. King leading
22 marches into hostile crowds of police, with clubs and
23 dogs.

24 Those of you who are too young to remember, just
25 try for a moment to imagine what it must be like to live

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1 every day of your life knowing that your adversary is
2 better armed, better financed, meaner, so all you could
3 count on is a God-given iron will and abiding faith that
4 right would somehow triumph over evil.

5 With the same faith and dedication, we too can
6 overcome some of the problems which seem to overwhelm us
7 today.

8 There is no secret that the persistence of crime
9 and violence is eroding the American landscape. We all
10 know what the problems are. The statistics are all too
11 familiar. But too often it seems that no matter how much
12 we accomplish, there is still too much to be done.

13 A New York Times-CBS poll recently found that 28
14 percent of African-Americans deem violence the number one
15 problem facing this nation.

16 About 14 percent of the whites felt the same
17 way. That's a large percentage of the nation mired in
18 concern and frustration about guns and violence, and the
19 loss of a sense of security.

20 It may seem paradoxical at first to suggest that
21 Dr. King's non-violence approach might help in our fight
22 to rid our streets of violent crime and death.

23 But I truly believe that the concept of non-
24 violence has application that we could greatly benefit
25 from today.

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1 In fact, there isn't a day that goes by that I
2 don't read in the newspaper or see on the television a
3 story about an individual, an individual who decides to
4 take some life-altering action on their own, and citizens
5 take on the work of block captains, and patrol their
6 streets to report suspicious activity, and adult men and
7 women take on the mentoring of young people, in need of
8 guidance, and the communities pull together to build
9 housing for the needy, and provide food for the homeless.
10 They are demonstrating in no small measure what non-
11 violent action, nineties style, can mean to a nation.

12 When Dr. King employed the practice of non-
13 violence, it was not new. He had borrowed his ideas from
14 the work of Thoreau and the efforts of Gandhi. So the
15 concept is sound. The concept is there. We just need to
16 shape it and make it fit in 1994.

17 I hear too much talk today about the so-called
18 lost generation, and the pessimism about the ability of
19 our young people to join in the battle for justice and
20 security.

21 As we struggle to right some of the wrongs that
22 are tearing us apart, I suggest we can ill-afford to give
23 up on anyone.

24 We must remember that when Dr. King started the
25 work that would transform not only his life, but ours as

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1 well, he was only a 26-year-old minister, just barely
2 getting started in life.

3 Yet, when he was called upon to lead the bus
4 boycott in Montgomery in 1955, he answered that call, and
5 aren't we fortunate that he did.

6 The ultimate success of this boycott gave birth
7 to what became known as the Civil Rights movement. But to
8 be 26 years old and have leadership thrust upon you could
9 not have been easy.

10 So let's think for a minute about how many 20-
11 somethings we write off when we talk about lost
12 generations and disenfranchised youth.

13 I know personally there are many young people
14 all over this great nation bursting with energy, bursting
15 with ideas about how to keep this country strong. We just
16 have to be sure that we are not too busy, are not too all-
17 knowing to listen to them.

18 (Applause.)

19 DR. BROWN: Listening was another of Dr. King's
20 great strengths. This ability to hear divergent
21 viewpoints and to accommodate the sin was important, as he
22 attempted to build coalitions to keep the Civil Rights
23 movement going forward. No leader can do it alone, and
24 foolish men listen only to themselves.

25 King was always surrounded by thinkers and

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1 doers, and he nurtured their strengths and played mentor
2 for some of today's African-American leaders.

3 He helped shape Andrew Young and Jesse Jackson,
4 and countless others. Can we do any less for those who
5 look to us for leadership and example?

6 I was thinking about this last week, the
7 situation which the Attorney General referred to, when we
8 attended a forum on violence held in Anacostia.

9 As we panelists held forth on the various
10 solutions to violent crime in our communities, two young
11 people came to the microphone to tell us why they felt
12 the need to begin planning their funerals. They spoke
13 with simple innocence about the very tenuousness of their
14 own lives.

15 And one could not help but think that here
16 before us are a teenage boy and a girl who have lost hope
17 And on some level they have lost faith.

18 They've lost faith in the ability of adults to
19 take care of them, and provide them with a safe and
20 nurturing environment in which to thrive. Helplessness
21 and hopelessness go hand in hand.

22 Would Dr. King have let our children be caught
23 up in the vice of either of these demons? We know that he
24 would not.

25 Staying close to the people you serve is another

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1 important lesson Dr. King taught us. He was willing to
2 join forces with other religious leaders, labor union
3 leaders, and politicians. He also was always backed up by
4 the people who lived in the community that he was working
5 in.

6 Now, this is a valuable lesson for us today,
7 because today we're too quick to dismiss, we're too quick
8 to ridicule, we're too quick to label, we're too quick to
9 compartmentalize those whose ideas make us a little bit
10 uncomfortable.

11 There's no one answer to any problem. As a
12 cabinet member in charge of this administration's drug
13 policy, I know that I have to keep in touch with our
14 citizens, because some of our best solutions come from
15 individuals such as yourselves.

16 I cannot begin to win the drug war by myself
17 In my 30 years of working law enforcement, I've learned
18 that without a partnership with the people, nothing will
19 change.

20 Without the support and commitment of people
21 like you, the problems we face today will be with us
22 another 30 years from now. I don't think we want that.

23 I don't think it would be a fitting honor for
24 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., because if we are truly
25 serious about honoring his memory, we must do as he did,

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1 just pick up the baton that is thrust at us, and we must
2 go forward, even when we are unsure of the way.

3 There are those who would have us believe that
4 the frontier of activism is closed, that it died during
5 the sixties, but I don't believe that, nor can we accept
6 that.

7 Dr. King's famous I have a dream speech,
8 delivered so brilliantly in 1965, could easily be given
9 today and resonate through the land with the same meaning,
10 the same urgency.

11 On that summer day in 1965 on the steps of the
12 Lincoln Memorial, Dr. King said that in a sense we've come
13 to this nation's capital to cash a check.

14 He said that when the architects of our republic
15 wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the
16 Declaration of Independence, they were signing a
17 promissory note to which every American was to fall under.

18 This note was the promise, he said, that all
19 men, yes, black men, as well as white men, would be
20 guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and
21 the pursuit of happiness.

22 But Dr. King went on to say, America has given
23 the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back
24 marked insufficient funds.

25 So despite the progress we've made since Dr.

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1 King spoke those words, who would deny that the note has
2 yet to be paid?

3 We still have much to do to make his dream
4 become reality. It's up to each one of us who want to pay
5 homage to the memory of Dr. King to adopt this dream as
6 our own. Let's not allow Dr. King's dream to become a
7 dream constantly deferred.

8 Now, I am certainly no starry-eyed optimist, but
9 I have to believe that real change is around the corner.
10 In the spirit of Dr. King's words, I look forward to a
11 time when we will hear more about cooperation than
12 alienation, more about hopefulness than helplessness, more
13 about fair play than gun play, and more about routine acts
14 of courage than random acts of violence.

15 And most of all, let us always believe that
16 individuals can make a difference. Dr. King's life, Dr.
17 King's work is a living testament to this abiding truth.

18 And I believe we all can appreciate the struggle
19 will not be an easy one, but I also believe that we can
20 take some comfort in an old spiritual that Dr. King used
21 to love so much, that tells us I don't feel in no ways
22 tired.

23 I've come too far from where I started from, and
24 nobody told me the road would be easy, and I don't believe
25 he brought me this far to leave me.

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1 (Applause.)

2 MR. MCBURROWS: I'd like to thank Dr. Brown for
3 those very stimulating and challenging remarks today. And
4 I think you surely have given us a message that we should
5 all take us as we leave the hall, a message of how we can
6 keep Dr. King's dream alive.

7 If I may ask both you and the Attorney General
8 to return to the lector for just a moment, I'd like to
9 offer you a small token of our appreciation for your being
10 here with us.

11 DR. BROWN: Thank you. I appreciate it.

12 MR. MCBURROWS: Thank you very much.

13 (Applause.)

14 MR. MCBURROWS: I'd like to thank all of our
15 speakers this morning for bringing us truly stirring
16 messages on this very special occasion.

17 We're now going to go on to the next part of the
18 program, which will provide an opportunity for us to hear
19 from this young group here in the audience.

20 I'll ask all our program participants to come
21 and take seats in the first row here in the audience. If
22 we can have the chairs taken off the stage now, we will
23 turn the program over to the Eastern High School choir.

24

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