



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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REMARKS OF THE HONORABLE JANET RENO,
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES,
TO THE
JUDGE LEARNED HAND AWARD LUNCHEON
OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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Corcoran Ballroom
Four Seasons Hotel
2800 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C.
Monday, April 12, 1999

P R O C E E D I N G S

(1:32 p.m.)

GENERAL RENO: Jeffrey, thank you so much.

To the American Jewish Committee, I salute you. Someone just asked me whether or not I had attended on of these events in the past. And I said, yes, in Miami on many occasions. AJC is a force for justice in this nation and we are all indebted to you.

I told Jeffrey that that's the nicest introduction I ever had, and if any of it's true all the good part is due to the person we honor today.

There are four roles that I see for a lawyer: the problem-solver, the advocate, the peacemaker, and the defender. Jamie Gorelick fills all those roles as well as any lawyer I have ever seen or known. She's not the advocate that Seth Waxman might be --

VOICE: Might be.

GENERAL RENO: Margolis.

(Laughter.)

GENERAL RENO: But she knows where to find the Seth Waxman's.

But why the reason she is the best in all the categories is because she is the greatest single principled, just problem-solver I have ever met in the bar or out of the bar, anywhere for as long as I have lived.

(Applause.)

Problem-solving does not mean popularity. It doesn't mean solving it to the client or to the Attorney General's satisfaction. It means solving it the right way, in a permanent, fair, and just solution.

All so often we see the advocate who wins their case in court and the problem's still there. Jamie looks beyond and solves the problem.

Jamie is a peacemaker because -- there might be others who can negotiate better than she can. She sometimes comes roaring in and overpowers you. But she overpowers you because she knows what the problem is and, instead of just working out a temporary solution that will fall apart in six months to a year, she thinks beyond and works out the problem.

I'd rather have Jamie as a defender than anybody I know, because, not that she can -- I might get somebody else to represent me in court.

(Laughter.)

But if I had Jamie Gorelick as my defender, I wouldn't have to go to court and the problem would be worked out.

(Applause.)

Jamie does all this while at the same time -- and I want to say this. These are the notes that I had before Mr. Zax spoke, but the fact that both of us say almost identically the same thing is to me the greatest tribute I can pay to both Rich and Jamie.

I think it was February the 18th I remember her sweeping in. She says I met her before, earlier in the week. But I remember thinking, what is a Jamie Gorelick when Bernie Nussbaum told me that she would head up the confirmation effort.

It has been a little over six years now and she is one of the best friends that anybody can have -- not just a friend that calls you upon occasion or calls you when it's really difficult. She's a friend that calls out of the blue and says, why don't you come to dinner. And it's not a rushed and hurried dinner. It's Dana coming in with her latest feat and Daniel wanting his mother to see something and Rich standing there beaming at us all. It is a wonderful dinner. She is a great and loyal friend.

Her family is something very special. To go there with her mother and father, with those two wonderful children, with the finest husband anybody could have, and sit in a family situation without tension and with love, again and again and again, makes that family something special, and she's at the heart of it.

So I would like to talk to you briefly about how we, if it were at all possible, make more Jamie Gorelick's and send them to practice law. First of all, we teach. Jamie is a master at this. You've heard of the kiddies. Many of the kiddies are here, and they are great and wonderful lawyers. And there's old kids, too, and she's made me a better lawyer. She has a wonderful way of motivating people and making them contribute as much as they possibly can. She is a master as a teacher.

So why don't we look to law schools and get law schools to start teaching problem-solving, not just conflict resolution, but how do we solve the problem our client is faced with? In my instance, how do we solve the problem the American people face, whether it be cybercrime, whether it be encryption issues, whether it be how we can make communities safe? Let's start teaching how to do that in law school.

But the educator is not going to solve the problem by themselves, the police officer by himself. We're going to have to learn as lawyers to work with others, and we might as well start in law school.

I don't know what the magic of torts and trusts and all these disciplines of the law are. Sometimes they're totally irrelevant. I can remember very little of my real property. I wish I had had a course in public health. So this afternoon at the Justice Department or today at the Justice Department we have had lawyers in the criminal justice system meeting with health care professionals in public health, mental health, and general health areas, to start building the bridge.

I think the American Jewish Committee can push and shove us along that path, so that educators and public health specialists and scientists can work with criminal justice professionals and the law to make a difference.

Now, Jamie is very good at that in terms of understanding other topics. Here she's gone off to be a great financier, and we always left that to Colgate at the Justice Department. But she tackled some of the toughest issues of technology, never having had a degree in science. She took on encryption and we haven't solved encryption yet, but we don't give up.

She took on protection of the infrastructure, the information infrastructure, an issue that staggers the imagination and, as Adlai Stevenson said, converts vanity to prayer. And she took it on with the tenacity, with the ability to master something different.

We have got to in the law bridge the gaps between the disciplines.

Dwight Eisenhower warned in his farewell address of the dangers of the industrial-military complex. He went on to point out the dangers of a scientific-technological elite. He said: "Yet, in holding scientific research and discovery in respect as we should, we must also be alert to the equal and opposite danger that public policy could itself become the captive of a scientific-technological elite."

Those words are very true today as we watch new concepts, new technology that just is unbelievable in its capacity to do good in this world and its capacity to turn this world upside down.

Eisenhower said: "It is the task of statesmanship to mold, to balance, and to integrate these and other forces, new and old, within the principles of our democratic system, ever aiming towards the supreme goals of our free society." Jamie Gorelick molds and balances and integrates the forces of technology with the principles of the law better than anybody I have ever seen.

It is that quality that makes her a great lawyer. But we have got to follow her example. We have got to make sure that we master technology, that the law

rules technology rather than technology ruling humankind and the law. That's going to take some lawyers being very flexible, willing to learn, willing to believe that the Constitution can carry on as we have known it without having to change because technology changes. Jamie makes me believe that it's possible. Let us move on in that regard.

Jamie is the person who sees beyond, who knows what's coming round the bend, who sees the pitfall and the hole in the road or the steep drop-off if you come too close to the edge, and she prepares. One of the places that she sees most at the end of the road is that you're not going to solve problems just by solving one person's problem in today's world. You have to look to the community. And the community won't solve its problems one by one. It will solve it by re-weaving the fabric of community around children and families at risk.

But she sees beyond, and she led the way in the Justice Department to recognizing that crime and the law are no longer domestic in primary consequence. Crime is now international in its consequence. Borders are shrinking. The world is becoming a mobile place, where the controversies of one place impact us all around the world.

She took the lead in making sure that the Justice Department positioned itself and prepared itself to be a partner with our diplomatic friends and with our friends in defense. It helped that she could explain to me how defense worked and what it meant, and that she used her knowledge in the wisest way to lead us on, to prepare for a new world, a world that is international in its scope.

But she then recognized something more important than anything else. All the programs, all the Justice Department initiatives, all the great concepts, all the grants, all the lawsuits, aren't going to make any difference unless we can give people the confidence that they can exist and live a life of self-respect with dignity, that they can live and aspire to their dreams with true equal opportunity.

Yes, we may have a program in civil rights that vindicates somebody's rights, but unless that person feels good about themselves, unless that person feels that they are somebody who can make a difference, unless that person feels that they are equal, not just under the law but in their own estimation, the law will never, never succeed in what we dream for it.

There is a statement on the east building -- on the east side of the Justice Department Building that says: "The common law is derived from the will of mankind, issuing from the people, framed by mutual confidence and sanctioned by the light of reason."

In Winston-Salem, North Carolina, last Tuesday I saw five young police trainees sit with five young people who were at risk. One young man told me about the program. He said: I hated police. I ran the other way when I saw them. I didn't want to talk to them. And when I came here and these guys said that they were going to mentor me, I walked the other way. And they kept talking to me, and I kept listening, but I didn't want to hear. Then finally, I heard, and they have helped me so much to feel better about myself, to show me how to act, to make a difference.

We have got to reach out beyond the law in its written words and its processes, to come to what the law is all about again. Jamie Gorelick does that as well as anybody I know. The way she works with people, the way she develops loyalties, so that I look across this room and see so many people that came to the Justice Department because of Jamie and served this nation with such distinction.

She helped forge a pro bono legal program that has contributed to the effort. She has done so much to make the law real for so many Americans. We've got to follow her example, because if we do not make the law real for Americans, for all Americans, you're going to see more and more people stand on the sidelines and hurl criticisms at the democratic institutions we hold dear.

Jamie, thank you for making the law as beautiful as I thought it would be a long time ago. Thank you for making me look good. But most of all, thank you for all you have done for all of us and, most particularly, for all the people of this nation.

(Applause and, at 1:48 p.m., end of remarks.)