



REMARKS OF

ATTORNEY GENERAL

JANET RENO

"Fight For Your Rights: Take A Stand Against Violence"

MTV Studios

New York, New York

Friday, May 7, 1999

10:00 a.m.

Thank you Judy and thank you for asking the Justice Department and Department of Education to be partners in this project. I know that Secretary Riley would have liked to have joined us today. He sends us his best wishes and he supports us. I would also like to thank the National Center for Conflict Resolution Education and the Recording Industry of America for their contributions to this effort and all the people that have made this possible. As Attorney General, I have been concerned with one special problem for the length of time that I have been attorney general and that is the problem of youth violence and what we can do to prevent it and give our children a strong and positive future. The overall rate of youth violence has dropped in recent years. But tragedies like the shooting in Littleton serve as grim reminders that we all must renew our efforts in every way possible to prevent violence and give our children a future. We are living in a culture of violence and we can do something about it.

Let's not cast blame as we try to reach solutions for we are all responsible. You can not just point to the Internet or movies or music videos or guns as the single reason why children or teenagers commit violent acts. And we can not just talk more about more rules and regulations. There are many pieces to the puzzle and all Americans must come together to figure out how we put the pieces together. But one thing is clear, if we are to end youth violence in America, we must involve the youth themselves for they have such wisdom, they have understanding, they are so perceptive, they have so much to contribute and believe me they want to contribute and they want to make a difference. Mozart composed his first symphony at age six, Einstein was sixteen when he wrote his first paper on the theory of relativity and Joan of Arc led 3,000 French knights at the Battle of Orleans when she 17. The youth of today are very wonderful. When I travel around the country and meet with them, they tell me they want to be part of a solution. They want adults to know that all young people are not involved in crime and gangs. You and I know that the vast majority of young people are good, fine people who attend school, volunteer in their community, assist others, and contribute to this nation in so many ways. They are doing so many incredible things. They think of wonderful things to do to help others to make a difference.

The "Fight For Your Rights: Take A Stand Against Violence" campaign offers young people another opportunity to make a contribution. Besides offering great music, I even got a chance to meet the Goo-Goo Dolls (Laughter). And my horizons have been greatly expanded this morning at MTV (Laughter). My nieces and nephews are not going to think I'm as archaic as they once did. This guide contains clear information and practical suggestions for how to get involved in a range of anti-violence activities. It includes resources for how to take action now. It has the phone numbers to call whether you choose conflict resolution, mentoring, artistic responses to violence, youth crime watch, or advocacy. You can make a difference. Another key part of the package is an interactive CD-ROM which walks the viewer through the kind of real life situations that often confront young people and helps them learn to resolve conflicts peacefully. It takes what role

works and translates it through to the young people who need it most.

As you know on Monday, the President is convening a strategy session in Washington with leaders across the spectrum of our society. They will discuss constructive strategies for ending our culture of violence and eliminating youth violence in this country. I look forward to that conversation. This partnership with MTV is the kind of effort we should all be undertaking. I can tell you that Secretary Riley and I have both been asked why the federal government would partner with MTV on a project like this. My answer is simple. It's because if you're going to talk about communicating with youth, we need to be sure to get the message out through the media that they listen to and since over 70,000 young people have already requested this guide in the short time that it has become available. I am sure we are on the right track.

I've met so many wonderful people this morning who are making a difference, who have contributed so much and one of them is Delight Young. Delight is a youth mediator, trainer, and leader in the conflict resolution field, a shining example of a young people who turned her own problem into a solution. As a result of fights with other students during middle school, Delight's guidance counselor suggested she become involved with the local peer mediation program. Delight doesn't do anything half-way. She now works with EARS, Effective Alternatives and Reconciliation Services, a Bronx based organization. It counsels young people on resolving conflicts peacefully. And she didn't just stop there. She is also a leader in the Team Trainers Institute and a member of the Society of Professionals in Dispute Resolution. All of this and she hasn't even graduated from high school yet. America, look at what the youth of America are doing and that's listening to Delight Young. (Applause)