



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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**ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION WITH THE HONORABLE JANET RENO
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
ON THE
MARYLAND RE-ENTRY PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE**

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**St. Katherine's Episcopal Church 2001 Division Street
Washington, D.C.
Monday, September 18, 2000**

The roundtable was convened at 9:05 a.m., HON. KATHLEEN KENNEDY TOWNSEND presiding.

(9:05 a.m.)

P R O C E E D I N G S

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: Good morning. I'm so glad that so many have shown up today. I'm particularly pleased and honored to be able to welcome our great Attorney General to the State of Maryland. We're grateful, Madam General, for the chance to showcase what the neighborhoods are doing in Maryland to help inmates re-integrate back into the community.

It is absolutely critical to reduce crime and the fear of crime, to reduce violence, for us to be able to give the inmates a chance to learn life skills and job skills. Too often they come back into our communities without that ability to be re-integrated and therefore go into an eternal cycle of going right back into the prisons.

But we believe, as we've shown with our Hot Spots Initiatives, our Spotlight in Schools initiative, and all the work that you've done at the Justice Department, that the more that we get the community to work with the law enforcement community, we get the community and the neighborhoods to watch what's going on and to welcome these inmates back in and to give them the life skills and the job skills, the better off they're going to be.

I am so pleased that you've chosen Maryland to come to, and I want to particularly say I'm so pleased that Stu Simms, who's our Secretary of Public Safety and Corrections, and Bill Sondervan at the Department of Corrections, has made such an effort to work with the Enterprise Foundation and other groups all around the city to make sure that we're going to do a good job for these people who have had such a tough time.

I'm also very glad to be able to welcome our Congressman, Elijah Cummings, with us, who I know this has been a great concern of his; Bart Harvey from the Enterprise Foundation; and Peter Saar, who I know is representing the Mayor this morning.

MR. SAAR: Good morning.

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: Thank you very much.

But we are most pleased to be able to have you here. Your leadership at the Justice Department has been quite extraordinary. Your determination to involve communities helped us to launch our Hot Spots Initiative right here. You have revolutionized law enforcement in our country.

You've said over and over and over again how critical it was to involve the communities, to involve the neighborhoods, and to make sure that everybody knows that stopping crime is a community responsibility. It not only takes a village to raise a child, it takes a village to stop a crime. It takes a village to raise a productive member of our community.

You've given the neighborhoods the tools to do just that, and I am so pleased to welcome you here today. Thank you, Madam Attorney General.

(Applause.)

REMARKS OF HONORABLE JANET RENO,

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

GENERAL RENO: Thank you, Lieutenant Governor Townsend. It is wonderful to be here and to see -- I can talk, but with your leadership and the leadership of so many people here, you are doing things that indicate what communities can do to make a difference in the lives of their citizens. When you bring communities together as you and your colleagues have done, it makes a difference.

We are here to discuss what happens to people when they come back from prison. We've got two alternatives, two general paths. One, we can do nothing either in prison or when they come out and they end up back in the apartment over the open air drug market where they got into trouble in the first place, without a job, without skills, without support, adrift.

Or we can work with them in prison, prepare them for their return, link them with people in the community, give the community a sense of responsibility about these people, address their drug problem, address any mental illness that may have been involved in the crime, provide for appropriate housing, link them with their children, make them accountable, but give them the skills to be accountable.

Let's just understand the dimension of the reentry problem in the country today. There are now two million people in prisons and jails across America. This represents an explosion in our correctional population, one that has occurred as more people are being sent to prison for longer sentences.

Sooner or later they're coming back to the community, and we can't stop it. This year more than 585,000 offenders are expected to return to their communities, communities like Baltimore all across the nation.

They come to prison with significant problems. 70 percent have a history of drug abuse. Only 10 percent are receiving drug treatment in state prisons. About 179,000 state prisoners have reported mental illness. Many offenders come into prison as dropouts or illiterate. They come into prison without life skills, without a job or a prospect of a job. Too often they come out with the same problems, as well as the added stigma of now being an ex-con who can't get a job, who is suspected too often of being the person who committed the offense in the neighborhood as soon as they return.

Now, some people say: I don't owe these people anything. If you're going to approach it from that point of view, then think about community safety and public safety and understand that, from whatever motivation you have, this program that facilitates a reentry and gives people a chance to get off to a fresh positive start can make a difference.

What can we do about this problem? First of all, it's not a Republican or a Democratic problem; it is America's problem and one that we must solve together. Together in partnership, we must develop a system of offender accountability, giving them the tools to be accountable, beginning with drug testing upon arrest, follow-through from trial to pre-sentence investigation to incarceration and to preparation for what happens when you get back to the community.

The President's budget request for fiscal year 2001 includes \$145 million for critical reentry programs. Under our proposal the Departments of Justice, Labor, Health and Human Services will work together in a brand-new collaboration to address every element of the reentry challenge in a group of high-risk communities with a common group of offenders, including juvenile offenders.

The President recognizes that reentry is a criminal justice problem, a public health problem, and an economic problem. As a result, the problems need to be tackled in a coordinated way. Under the President's budget, the Justice Department will dedicate \$60 million in offender reentry initiatives, the Department of Labor will dedicate \$75 million in job-related programs, and the Department of Health and Human Services will dedicate \$10 million in substance abuse and mental health treatment.

I call on Congress to fund this vital initiative, and I know with the Congressman's great support -- it's going to be a difficult issue in these last few weeks, but, Congressman, thank you for your leadership in this area from the beginning.

Given the high percentage of prisoners, 70 percent, with a history of drug abuse, this element of the reentry is particularly critical. I don't want to wait. I want to make sure that we figure out everything that we can do as we prepare people, for research shows that drug treatment in prison, when combined with drug testing and a system of graduated sanctions after release, can cut recidivism by as much as 80 percent.

You use the carrot and stick approach. You say: We've provided you treatment in prison, we're going to test you as you come out; if you test positive, there are going to be consequences. If you work with us, we're going to get you off on the right foot.

To support just this sort of treatment, I am pleased to announce today over \$57 million in grants to all 50 states to provide substance abuse treatment to offenders in state and local correctional facilities. Since 1996, the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Grant Program has provided more than \$230 million in vital funding and we've got to make sure that we don't let this funding go to waste. By that I mean we've got to provide the support in the communities, not just for drug testing and drug treatment and continued drug treatment support, but the other related functions that need to be accompanying this

effort to give offenders a chance of success.

But there's more to do. Over the past year the Department of Justice has been working to develop several different approaches. We are working with 17 communities across the country to test two new approaches. The first concept is a reentry court and the second is a reentry partnership.

Reentry court oversees an offender's return to the community after release from prison. It uses positive reinforcement and a good pat on the back when somebody deserves it, and it uses the stick in the carrot and stick balance when somebody deserves a sanction for ignored an opportunity to get off on the right foot. The message is clear: Stay clean, stay out of trouble. We'll help you get a job, we'll help you prepare in terms of a skill. But if you come back testing positive for drugs, if you commit a further crime, if you violate the conditions of your release, you're going to pay through some more serious punishment every step of the way.

If we can make these reentry courts have a manageable caseload and adequate resources -- and this is vital -- if we overwhelm these courts, if we give them totally inadequate resources to match their caseload, people will think it's just the same old thing again. But if we can give a reentry judge the opportunity to work with somebody with resources that are manageable, we can truly make a difference.

Think about it. St. Katherine's could adopt somebody coming out of prison, start the link before they left prison, help them get to know their children again, help them get to know their community again, identify aptitudes and match those aptitudes with jobs that may be available in the community, advocate for them, provide for a place that they can go when they feel like they're about to lose it and people are not understanding them. So much can be done when we work together to achieve these goals.

The collaboration between the Division of Corrections -- and I've got my Division of Corrections shield on today --

and the Baltimore Police Department is so encouraging. To see the Enterprise Foundation joining with the Mayor's Office in this effort is so exciting, to improve support and services to returning offenders.

Without the support and resources of the community development corporations, though, and the citizens living in the community, it wouldn't work. I think we are all in this together to make a difference, and if we do this we can go a long way towards ending the culture of violence in this country.

Crime is down eight years in a row. We cannot become complacent. We have these offenders returning. Let us work together, as you are doing in this community, to make a difference for these offenders for the future.

One of my great colleagues in the Cabinet is Secretary of Labor Alexis Herman, who has been a pioneer in this effort, and it's great for me to welcome Ed Montgomery, the Deputy Secretary of Labor, and thank you so much for being here.

MR. MONTGOMERY: I want to thank the Attorney General for her leadership on this very, very important question. Secretary Herman shares her vision that we must do something to save a generation of young people who are involved with the criminal justice system. Along with Lieutenant Governor Townsend Kennedy, I thank her again for her leadership within the State of Maryland and Congressman Cummings as well for his leadership on the Hill.

This is a critical time for this initiative. If we look at the economy, it presents a unique opportunity. Our economy is growing. Unemployment around the country is at 4 percent. We have created 22 million jobs. Employers are demanding skilled workers. That gives us a chance to finally reach this other population of our young people, our young people in our inner cities, and give them a step up onto the ladder of success into the economic mainstream.

As the Attorney General pointed out, we have a situation where 500,000 people leave prison each year. Unfortunately,

two-thirds of them will return to jail within 3 years. How do we break that cycle? We have a two-pronged strategy for breaking the cycle.

First, we need to make sure that they don't enter into the criminal justice system to begin with. The Secretary has launched a Youth Opportunity Movement involving grants to local communities, some \$250 million worth of grants. Baltimore received its first \$11 million grant. Jean Cooper is here from the project in Baltimore. This is projects that bring together the whole community, brings together the people who are around this table, whether that be nonprofit organizations, the Mayor's office, the criminal justice system, the schools.

All those people are necessary to solve this problem. It takes the whole community being involved, because these young people have multiple problems. Sometimes it's education, sometimes it's drug abuse, sometimes it's they have children out of wedlock. They need the whole community to be involved to solve this problem, to prevent them from going into the criminal justice system.

In addition to preventing them from going into the criminal justice system, we need to take those who have gone into the system and make sure that they don't go back. That's why this re-integrating of youth offenders initiative is so critically important.

As the Attorney General pointed out, the President has proposed a \$145 million initiative which is currently in front of Congress. We need that initiative to be fully funded this year. It will allow the Department of Labor, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Justice to come together in real partnerships to attack this problem that is in front of us today.

So again, the Department through its Youth Offenders, hopefully with this new initiative from the President, also with the leadership of Senator Specter, who has been a real champion on youth offenders, we can get this initiative through Congress, because this is really the golden time to

do it. If we can't do it now, when can we do it? Crime rates are coming down. This economy is strong. Employers need workers. What we need is a strategy that brings these young people back into society.

So I think this is a critical time and I appreciate the opportunity.

GENERAL RENO: I think, Congressman Cummings, if you could say a few words, sir.

REPRESENTATIVE CUMMINGS: I'd be happy to.

(Laughter.)

First of all, I want to thank you, Madam Attorney General, for not only coming to Baltimore, but coming to my neighborhood. I really appreciate it. I live about five blocks from here.

Just this morning -- and Jackie Cornish, who is our neighborhood leader here, can testify to the kind of stories that we see every day, the very thing that you're talking about. Just this morning when I was leaving my house at about quarter of 7:00, I ran into a fellow named Larry and I said to Larry, I said: How you doing? He said: I'm doing all right.

I said: Well, you hang in there. He said: I'm going to try. See, Madam Attorney General, in this neighborhood that's slang for saying "I don't think I'm going to make it."

I know Larry. Larry has been in jail three or four times. What Larry needs is a job. He needs a job. I am so glad that someone on your level and President Clinton, of course, and Vice President Gore has the foresight and the understanding to know that life does not end at the moment that the person enters prison. As a matter of fact, they are going to come back to our streets and they are going to be the Larry's, and the question is going to be how do they support themselves so that they become a significant and contributing member to our society? That's what it's all

about.

As you look around this room, Madam Attorney General, you see some wonderful, wonderful people from every aspect of Maryland life. They're here on a Monday morning, fresh, looking good, ready for work. But more importantly, they all care. They care.

If you just took a little survey, you would see that we've got every aspect of life represented at this table, but they understand that it is a holistic approach that we -- and that's the way we have to do this. You said something a little earlier, and I don't think you were asking me to help with the budgetary process and stand on the floor and encourage my fellow members to help out with this budget. I don't think you asked, because you knew you didn't have to ask.

(Laughter.)

GENERAL RENO: I knew that you were going to be there.

REPRESENTATIVE CUMMINGS: I'm going to be there and I've been there, because to me this is so very, very important. I've said it over and over again, we have one life to live. This is no dress rehearsal and this so happens to be the life.

So many of our young people in this very neighborhood fall between the cracks, and I'm so glad that what we are trying to do is create here a safety net to catch them and it be a safety net that is much like a device that lets them spring back into life, so that they can support their families, so that they can make a difference.

So I really do applaud you for being with us this morning, and I thank every single person who is here with us this morning because, as I said before, we all care and we want to make a difference. Thank you very much.

GENERAL RENO: Thank you, Congressman.

Joann Levy, would you speak from the perspective of the Enterprise Foundation.

MS. LEVY: Sure. Thank you, Madam Attorney General.

I had the privilege of speaking at a National Institute of Justice research and evaluation conference this past July about our planned Reentry Partnership Initiative here in Maryland with our emphasis on Baltimore City. I was able to share our program design, but I asked the folks at the conference, I said: I'm sure you're wondering why a housing organization is up here talking about reentry and recidivism. I think we've heard here this morning that folks coming out, as we all know, especially our communities that are represented here today -- Druid Heights, Historic East Baltimore, and Sandtown-Winchester -- know all the folks that are coming back into their neighborhoods from jail, and they need work and they need a place to live.

That's why the Enterprise Foundation is involved. I think if Jim Rouse were here today, Bart, he'd be very proud of this initiative.

We were very pleased to be asked by the Division of Correction about a year and a half ago to work on the community-based side of this project. I'm just going to take a second to describe to all of you what we're planning to roll out in January of 2001. There are about 13,000 inmates that are released from prison annually in the State of Maryland and about 60 percent of them come into Baltimore City. A disproportionate number of those inmates come into the neighborhoods that you see represented around this table today.

We have gotten together with the Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice, the Division of Probation, the Baltimore Police Department, and other partners to look at what needs to happen in neighborhoods to make sure that folks coming back from prison don't go back in. What we are planning to do is to provide a comprehensive assessment and case management system for select groups of inmates while still in prison.

These case management services will be tied to a transition coordinator that will then when these folks come out back into the neighborhoods, they will then have the extended case management services provided to them for up to two years once they come out of prison.

These services will include job training, employment readiness, vocational services, educational services, medical services, substance abuse, family support services -- everything that is needed to help these individuals live full, productive, and constructive lives so they can become productive members of the community, the city, and the State of Maryland.

We're very, very fortunate here to have a tremendous amount of support from the city, the state, and the federal government to get this initiative off the ground. But I cannot emphasize enough that without the commitment of the neighborhoods, the community development corporations, and their partners, this initiative would not be possible.

Everyone recognizes that services have to be seamless, they have to be integrated, and they have to be tied together for a long period of time in order for this to work.

So I'm very honored to have the opportunity to speak on behalf of my partners, and I thank you very much for coming to Baltimore, Madam Attorney General.

GENERAL RENO: I thank you.

(Applause.)

Speaking of Baltimore, Peter Saar, would you like to say a few words?

MR. SAAR: Thank you, Madam Attorney General. I welcome you on behalf of the Mayor of the City of Baltimore. He's on the other side of the world at this point. I'm not sure exactly what the event is that he may be trying to view, but I know it's tied with the Olympics. But I'm sure he's rooting for the Irish somewhere.

In any event, I welcome you to Baltimore City and I thank you for having taken the time out of a very busy schedule to attend to a relatively speaking minor pilot program presentation for you. When I say relatively minor, there are many more that have many more dollars attached to them, but you have to start small before you can go big, and that's the right way to go, in increments.

Thank you.

GENERAL RENO: Speaking of starting small, you're starting together and that makes all the difference. I would like to hear from you. I'm going to ask a question, but I'd like to see your thoughts. If you were the Attorney General of the United States, what would you be doing? What do you suggest others be doing to build the best possible opportunities that will permit people to come back, to become involved in positive pursuits, to get a job, to become responsible for their families, and to contribute to the community?

If you were Attorney General, what would you be doing? What do we need to do to make this program work?

MR. JONES: Good morning, Madam Attorney General and Congressman Cummings and Lieutenant Governor Kennedy Townsend, the rest of our guests. I think a couple of things come to mind to me.

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: Could you identify yourself.

MR. JONES: I'm sorry. I'm Joe Jones from the Center for Fathers, Families, and Workforce Development here in Baltimore.

I think three things have impacted our communities over time that we have begun to address. One is our social welfare system that has begun to be dismantled and reconfigured. Also, our public housing, the way that we put people in projects and stack them on top of one another, that we've now begun to implode across the country. Then of course, our decision to disinvest in rehabilitative

services for people who have been incarcerated has led to some of the stories like the one that Congressman Cummings alluded to earlier about the young man in this community.

But I think if I were the Attorney General I may do a couple of things. I think one is -- and I'm sure other people will have other comments that go directly to your comment, but I think we have to have a major communication strategy that informs the country of the impact people coming back to the community have on communities.

Most people don't care what happens to them if it doesn't sit next door to them. Sandtown-Winchester, Hepcat, and Druid Heights are small communities where people who make decisions don't live. The community comes together in this grassroots effort, but we have to let people across the country know the devastation that occurs and that when you put people into prison they are going to come out.

Now, unfortunately and I guess maybe in a morbid kind of way fortunately, we see crime going across Baltimore City's borders into other communities and it's beginning to have some kind of impact on people's decisions. However, I don't think we can expect to get the kind of support in Congress unless we have the kind of communications strategy that puts a face, a human face, on the kind of tragedies that we see in this community.

I think the other major point I would make is that I believe we've got to have jobs and other kinds of support, but don't underestimate the clinical/psychosocial needs of people coming from prison, particularly around men who don't know how to date, don't know how to re-integrate with their families, who don't know how to sit down and have a conversation with their children.

It is awfully important that we not underestimate how difficult it is to come out of a prison system after a long period of time and be able to sit down at a table and talk to somebody you just simply don't know. There are some people who are going to come out of the criminal justice system today who have never actually seen a cell phone. Can

you imagine how strange that is, to see a cell phone and people walking down the street talking? Those are some of the psychosocial issues I'm talking about.

GENERAL RENO: Thank you. Mr. Jones, thank you. I think that is a statement. That's one of the reasons I'm here and I've been in other places talking about reentry and how important it is for a year.

It's interesting to hear the reaction. One police commissioner said: I heard you talking about it a year ago and I said that wasn't going to be a problem for me, and now I see crime starting up again in certain categories and it involves people coming out from the prison who are getting into turf battles with the younger offender who took over their corner, and we've got to bring them out the right way.

So I thank you and I thank you for your thoughtful comments about how we've got to teach them life skills.

Mr. Sturdivant -- Commissioner Sondervan.

MR. SONDERVAN: Yes, Madam Attorney General. From the Correction Commissioner's perspective, I believe that everything that was said here today -- and this is a very common sense thing that we're going to do. As you talk about the growth of prisons in this country, it went from 600,000 to over 2 million in 11 or 12 years. The same thing is going to happen in our prison system.

Although our budgets have increased, the money's gone to build basically new prisons and pay correctional officers' salaries. The resources available to do these very commonsense things that we really need to do haven't been there.

So from my perspective, I think that we have the partnerships, we have the know-how, we have the will, we have the commitment to do it, but we really lack the resources to get it done. From my point of view, I think that's very important.

GENERAL RENO: Yes.

MR. SEIPP: Again I want to welcome you to Baltimore and thank you for bringing you and your staff here. My name is Michael Seipp and I work in East Baltimore, the other side of town.

For us, I think the biggest issue that we are confronted with in our community, which by the Health Department statistics we have approximately 6,000 hard core addicted individuals out of a population of 43,000. Until we begin to relook how substance abuse treatment actually happens in the community, starting, and we consider -- the prison actually sits in East Baltimore, so we consider that part of our community.

But substance abuse treatment in too many venues is treated as a medical issue, so that a six-week treatment program is what is provided for an individual. That's fine for the medical side, assisting somebody going through detox whatever. But the reality is that for the men and women in East Baltimore who have substance abuse problems, we're really looking at a 12 to a 24-month recovery period, and until we begin to define substance abuse treatment recovery, full recovery, as economic self-sufficiency for that individual and integration back into the family for that individual through whatever program they choose to select for their recovery, we're going to fail. We're going to continue to put 80 percent of our addicts back on the street, not only coming out of jail but also coming out of recovery treatment, because they're lost after that initial period. There's no support for them.

So if I was the Attorney General and I didn't have to worry about politics, I would cut the war on drugs budget in half in terms of what goes to try and stop the flow of drugs into the community and put it into reducing the demand for the drug. That means that if somebody comes in for support that we're going to be there for them for 24 months and not just for 3 to 6 weeks.

GENERAL RENO: One of the things we did in the reentry court

that we proposed is modeled very much after the drug court. In Miami we started a drug court in 1987 operating under the carrot and stick approach, not the solely medical model, but the thought that you need 12 months at least to show that you can participate in job training programs, that you can participate in life skill programs, that you can test regularly and you don't know, randomly, so that you are under the supervision of the court, that you report back to the court on a regular basis.

When you have that supervision and when you have a caseload with resources, treatment resources that are adequate to deal with that caseload, job training and the like, it can truly make a difference. So I think your point is extraordinarily well taken, but we need to look at the continuum: testing once they come into the system, treatment, aftercare, follow-up, support mechanisms.

But you made a statement and I hope you're right, but so many people have taught me that you never fully recover. You've got to constantly be alert and on the watch for people who are about to fall back, and reach out, as this community seems to be willing to do, to get them back into productive life.

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: Stuart, Mr. Secretary.

MR. SIMMS: Good morning. Stuart Simms, Secretary of Public Safety and Correction Services.

If I might, one of the partners that we've had in this effort -- and I don't know if it works on the federal level -- has been our State Department of Education. If I might, I'd like to introduce Dr. Grasmick, who has two aspects of data which have helped us and really prepared us for this partnership.

Dr. Grasmick.

DR. GRASMICK: Good morning, Madam Attorney General. It's wonderful to have you here.

We do believe in Maryland we have a unique relationship between our Division of Public Safety and Corrections and the Maryland State Department of Education. We have a realization and a documentation that 80 percent of our inmates are dropouts from school, and there is an inextricable relationship between education and recidivism.

We are very grateful to Congressman Cummings, who is always advocating for Maryland to be on the cutting edge, to have a grant working with Minnesota and Ohio to document the very fact that our belief is true. The preliminary data tell us that in fact those who receive education in prison are less likely to enter recidivism in terms of returning to prison. We do have that data now. The study is not complete, but this is very concrete.

I would say that in Maryland last year we granted a thousand high school credentials. We granted almost 2,000 literacy certificates, and another thousand job training certificates.

We are engaged also, through your efforts, Congressman Cummings, and other members of the Maryland delegation, in a prison to work effort which is providing for specialized skills for our incarcerated population, so that when they make this transition they make it with some requisite skills that will enable us to predict better success for them.

We are very committed. With the Lieutenant Governor's tremendous help, our Governor's Workforce Investment Board has embraced this prison to work effort as a critical piece of our communication with our corporate and business community to provide these job opportunities when we do our part with the Division of Public Safety and Correction on providing the skills necessary.

GENERAL RENO: Those findings would be so important. If I can get copies, that would be tremendous.

DR. GRASMICK: Absolutely.

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: We have a number of ex-offenders who are sitting at the table. Alonzo, Mr. Brown, would you like to say a few words?

MR. BROWN: Good morning, Madam Attorney General.

GENERAL RENO: Good morning, Mr. Brown.

MR. BROWN: Good morning, Lieutenant General Townsend.

I'm Alonzo Brown, an ex-offender, now the proud business owner of the Bird 33 Sportswear. One of the things I was listening to, I was from the community, the community of Cherry Hill. I wind up getting in some trouble, getting arrested, going through the boot camp aftercare program, which I think the aftercare program is the key to anything, because the whole time I was at the boot camp all I kept saying, when I come home I'm going to be back to myself again. But then after I went through the aftercare program and I met up with Elijah Cummings, Congressman Cummings, which he was a Delegate at that time, so the aftercare program was held at his church.

Every day I would go -- I mean, we used to have to go every Saturday, every Saturday morning. And every Saturday morning I used to go to the church. I used to always say like: I'm going back to the streets. But every day -- I mean, every Saturday when I go, Congressman Cummings would say something to us, the group, and it prolonged it longer and longer.

So then it was like I say about like five months I was going to the aftercare program. It actually kept me on the right track. I had a whole lot of help from Dave Johnson, which was my mentor at that time. It was a whole lot of people.

But then I applied for the loan. I went to get a job and everything like that, but because of my past record -- I know this is how a lot of guys in the community feel because I talk to them all the time. When we apply for jobs they turn us down because they see our past record and they

never give us a chance to see if we could do the job.

So that was one of the problems. I think that's one of the problems, because every time someone applied for a job -- I dealt with these people every day. I'm from Cherry Hill community. Every day, I lived there for 23 years. Every day someone would say the same thing to me. I might say -- and the key word Congressman Cummings said, "try." They always say "try." See, he instilled that in me, to get rid of the "try" and just do it. Don't say "try" because if you say "try" you're automatically putting yourself less than what you want to be.

But it's a long story. I've been working --

GENERAL RENO: It's a good one.

MR. BROWN: Like I say, I went to the boot camp and everything, and I came home, I went to the aftercare program, which was real key. I applied for a loan, the business loan, in '91. I've been trying to do this from '91, since '91. I applied for the loan. They wind up -- sorry about that.

I applied for the loan. They denied me because of my past record. I still kept working on it, working on it, working on it, working on it, working on it. Then I met the Development Credit Fund, Mr. Muldraugh from Development Credit Fund. We put everything together. We put the package together again, we sent it in to the federal government again.

Once again, they denied it because of my past record. I didn't have no experience. But I didn't quit. Most guys would have quit it. I'm telling you, most guys -- I talk to them every day. Most guys would have quit it.

We applied again. It came through for me. So after nine years of just hard working and grinding, I now own my own business.

(Applause.)

So if I was Attorney General --

(Laughter.)

-- my key thing would be the prison systems. I talk to guys every day. I send packages over to the prison systems and everything. To me personally, it starts from the prison system because they get the laid back. See, when I went to boot camp we didn't lay back. We couldn't demand what we wanted to do. We had to be on a time schedule. Everything was time schedule.

In prison they get to lay back, they get to do what they want to do. So when they come home, that's just how they're going to react to what they used to do in prison. So then when they don't get a job they go straight back to the street for what they used to do, because there's nothing in prison to guide them to the point of moving on.

So that's one of the things I would correct, the prison thing with just laying back thinking they can do -- doing what they want to do. That's one thing I'd change.

The key thing is the kids. Today's kids, I watch them grow up every day, and recreation centers are getting closed down. They don't have nowhere to go, so they, like most people would do, turn to the corners. Then they turn to the corners and they meet Joe. Joe is the big shot at the community, so everybody wants to follow him. And then it just keeps going, the ball just keeps rolling.

GENERAL RENO: Let me point out, you've just heard -- you heard Deputy Secretary Montgomery talk about why it's so important right now. We're importing workers. We've got workers here, showing what you can do in prison to teach people skills to prepare them and how important that is, and we've got to make sure that Congress has those pieces of information.

MR. MONTGOMERY: And the community involvement, he talked about that.

GENERAL RENO: And you can make the difference.

But I've got to share with you a story that happened to me about two weeks ago. I was walking with my detail in an area that kind of went from bad to good in Washington, and three men were on the street corner. One was on his bicycle and he pedaled over to me and he says: Hi, Ms. Reno; I just got out of prison; I've been there for 19 years; will you buy me a sandwich. I said: I left my purse at home.

(Laughter.)

And I said: But I'm really working on programs that provide a reentry. He says: Ah, don't worry about me. He said: See that building over there; you should be rehabbing that building to get the young kids off the street corners and out of the streets and into that program and to make a difference.

I said: Yeah, but I don't want to give up on you. And he gave me a big hug and he said: I'll be okay, and he pedaled off.

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: Jackie, do you want to introduce yourself?

MS. CORNISH: My name is Jackie Cornish and I'm the Executive Director here at Druid Heights Community Development Corporation, and we are one of the partners in this initiative.

Before I go any further, though, I just need to make a fool of myself and just say, Ms. Reno, I have adored you and admired you forever. You're one of my absolute favorite heroines and I really mean that from the bottom of my heart.

GENERAL RENO: Yes, but if I've done anything it's because of people like you in the community.

MS. CORNISH: Thank you very much.

But I just wanted to say, because I really think that it's important that, as the Lieutenant Governor said, that we hear from the ex-offenders because this is what it's really all about. But I wanted to just give you a little quick background on what Druid Heights has been doing.

Approximately a little over five years ago, we really felt like we were being overwhelmed by our corners. We decided just to go out to the corners and ask the guys on the corners: Why are you here and what can we do to get you off the corners? We took bags out there with us and we said: The first thing we want you to know is that we're not coming out here to move you off the corners, but if you're going to be here, though, take this bag and put the trash in it, okay, and stop littering.

Well, unbeknownst to us, they came back and said, okay. I mean, it was an instant okay. And we started talking and saying: Well, what can we do? Why are you out here? What can we do to help you?

We want jobs. So we got to thinking at Druid Heights. We didn't have any money. We didn't know where in the world we were going to get money for jobs. But we just said we need to come up with something for them. I asked them, I said: If I find you a job, are you sure you're going to work? Will you really work for us? Will you really do the job, no matter what the job is? They said yes.

I went back. We started writing grants. We got a little piece of grant from the city to do some cleaning and boarding and stuff like that. I went back and I said: I got the money, I got a little bit of money; are you willing to work? Yes.

I said: There's only two conditions. What? I said: You got to be in trouble and you got to be on drugs. And they said: Excuse me, are you talking to me? I mean, it was really amazing to them because we actually wanted these guys. We didn't want -- you know, everybody else on the corner, fall back. If you're not on drugs and you're not in trouble, you're not an ex-offender, you can easily get a job; we

don't want you.

Nobody stepped back off the corner, of course. We had nine guys. We started out with nine guys. Today we have eight guys. We lost one. I'd say our success rate is 100 percent or 99 percent. But with that grant we were able to take those guys, put them to work, pay them nine dollars an hour.

Don't believe it when people tell you that these men don't want to work. They do want to work. Don't believe it when they say that they don't have self-respect. They do. We need to give them something to respect themselves with, though.

And don't believe it when people say they won't work for minimum wage. They do. It's just that they have to have hope behind that minimum wage. They have to know that down the road I can improve myself, down the road I can complete my education.

We required our guys: If you don't have your education complete, at least your basic, you've got to finish the twelfth grade. We'll pay for it. We made a deal with Community College of Baltimore to pay them \$100 just for that eight-week program for our guys to go.

We made it so that they also have to do the cup for me. They will do the cup for me, and I told them: I'm going to give you three strikes and you're out, okay. Once it turns blue; three times it turns blue, third time it turns blue, too bad for you, you're out of here. But they did it.

Sitting beside me now, though -- and also we gave them benefits, full insurance, medical, dental, everything. They want to work now. They also voluntarily go down to the support services office when they come on board and say: My name is Andre Fisher, I am now employed, I have children who are receiving assistance, here's my social security number and where I work; start taking it out of my pay. That's what these men are doing.

So I say -- lord God, I can't even imagine being Attorney

General, but if I had the power, I would also address those men who are outside those gates also, too, because, yes, we need to address them inside, get them before they come out on the street. But we have them who are already out here on the street and all we need is the tools and the resources to go up to those guys on the corner and say: What can I do for you?

One other thing. The same meeting that you're holding here today, hold it inside those prisons. Go in there and ask those guys. Let them see that you the Attorney General truly mean business about them coming out on the street.

With that I say thank you, and let me just let Andre Fisher --

(Applause.)

MR. FISHER: Good morning, everyone. I am an ex-defendant. I've just got to give all praise to God. If you see any tears, it's tears of joy. I'm not used to talking to a lot of people. But I have no shame in who I am. I can stand for something today.

I am an ex-defendant. I just recently, Friday, celebrated three years uninterrupted clean time.

(Applause.)

I have a family. I just had twins. I'm 48 years old and things do return back.

But my point is, like everyone else, something has to be done. Being an ex-defendant, like Ms. Cornish said, I was one of those guys, and today I'm still on the path. But what I think we really need to do is concentrate on before they get out and the ones that are already out.

It's a joy to be a productive member of society as opposed to being on the other end of the fence. Believe me, I've never had more peace in my life since I've changed my life, and that's truly a blessing. If it wasn't for God, I

believe I wouldn't be here, bottom line.

But in dealing with the everyday challenges, I don't have to run from that. My responsibility tolerance is so great now, it's unbelievable. Again I say the tears you see, believe me, are tears not just of joy, but gratitude, because that's something you don't get in prison. You have to be hard, you have to be tough. You can't do what I'm doing in prison. You can't cry in front of people.

Some of these things is where we need to touch people, because people only want to be internally touched. If you talk about cleaning, we can do the outside all we want. We can board buildings, we can make them all brand new and shiny again. But it doesn't mean a thing if the work inside is not being done. That's where we need to concentrate as a community, as a village, as this country, to want to get back on track.

Now, I do boarding and cleaning work. I also now, with the opportunity of Druid Heights, like you, Alonzo, if I stay on the path will one day have my own business. That's one of the programs Druid Heights has to offer, people becoming entrepreneurs and this type thing.

Believe me, I never in my wildest dreams over five years ago would believe that I would even be clean, first of all. Second of all, I had no, no idea that I would get my family back, because now I understand that bridges you burn can be rebuilt.

But it has to start inside. It has to start inside. Those guys in jail, when it's all said and done and the lights go out, them guys are doing just what I'm doing: Wishing and hoping and praying that someone would give them a chance. That's what Druid Heights did for me. It gave me a chance.

As far as what you were talking about, I am a prime example that "once an addict, always an addict" is a lie, because it's misinformation that people, ex-offenders and other people with problems, whether it be mentally, whatever -- people can change and all people want is a chance for

someone to believe in them.

Now, you talked about a lot of things here this morning and I believe in all of them, but I also believe that you first have to get deep inside the person and let them -- because everybody wants and it ain't about your wants. It's about your necessary needs. That's where God has met me, with my needs, because my wants can get me in trouble sometimes.

But the other thing, like I was saying about what Michael said, and that is we've got to be able to have this ex-offender as well as drug user, because most ex-offenders are drug users -- but let me tell you, everybody don't use drugs. There's a lot of people in jail who didn't use drugs. So that might not be their problem, and when they get out they're going to have the same problems and issues that everybody else has when coming out of prison. So sometimes it ain't always about the drugs.

See, I know for a fact that it takes a support group once you get out of anything. You mentioned, Mr. Brown, about the aftercare program. That aftercare program only works when the person takes that word "try" out and starts doing some things, because, back to what you said, Michael, the rehab situation is not just a 30-day cure. Most people as far as drugs, and like in my case, they've used -- in my case I used for over 30 years and here I just celebrated three years of uninterrupted clean time, and that's a blessing by itself.

No, it wasn't no fast, quick -- no offense to doctors, but I believe that if you need help you need help, and if you need outside help you get outside help. But one thing I know for ex-drug users: Support is the number one cure. Being around other recovering people is the number one frame of help in that area.

As far as working, I believe, like Ms. Cornish said, everybody wants to work, everybody wants to be self-supporting or a productive member of society.

I want to pass it to my co-worker.

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: We have one more speaker, so we'll hear from the other ex-offender.

Andre, thank you so much.

MR. WILLIAMS: Good morning, everyone. I'm an ex-offender. I want to thank God for allowing me to be here.

It seems like to me that we know what the problem is and, from listening to everybody I heard, we've got a good amount of answers. It's just that we need the necessary funding to get it done.

I was that person who was incarcerated and became determined that I wanted to change my life and when I get home, no matter what, I was going to fly straight. Coming home, I was blessed with the opportunity to get into a program such as Druid Heights, which is what I needed because, with my background and with the working education that I had, the line was real thin for me. Had it not been for a program like that, after a while I know what I would have did.

When I was locked up I talked to so many brothers that wanted to do the right thing when they came home, and I would say about 90 percent of us do want to do the right thing. 10 percent talk about coming back out here, trying the streets again with another way of doing it. But out of that 90 percent, when we get out here there's just not enough opportunity, and as a period of time goes by you just go back to what you know. It's real simple.

But I'm a proven fact that if you're given a chance at a job, such as I was given at the program -- I found out that not only was I able to take care of my family, but I was exposed to ideas and concepts of bettering myself and people in the neighborhood. With this in my mind, I started thinking differently. I started saying: Hey man, I could see a future for me; I can envision some things; I can see, like this brother, one day becoming an owner or a part-owner, as me and Andre have talked about, in a construction company.

I've been given a chance to -- well, I've been sent to school through this program to get my CDL license, which I've completed and passed. Currently I'm also in the carpentry field and we're building houses in the community.

The good thing that I like and the way that I think is that, as he said, a lot of kids -- when I was a kid I used to watch guys drive by and they'd have all that fancy stuff and I would say: Who's that dude? And they'd say: That's Joe, you know; he got this and he got that and he got all them guys working for him and, man, he's big time. And you say: Man, yeah, that's the way.

But I don't think that way today. I think about the kids, the day when I ride by them, because I've been blessed with a car. I want one of those kids to say: Hey, who's that? I want them to say: Hey, that's Dave, man; he's working, man; he's doing good, he's flying straight. You know, give them a chance to say, yeah, that's what I want to do.

More importantly, my kids. I got three daughters and three sons. I want to be a good role model for them. So in thinking this way and walking straight, with the opportunity from these programs, maybe my sons and my daughters will look at me -- up to now they do -- and say: Yeah, I want to be like my father; I want to work, I want to go to college. They're just thinking positive, and it makes me feel good.

It's real important, because my life has definitely changed. I was Larry at one time and now I'm sitting here amongst you all. It's blowing me away, it really is.

(Laughter and applause.)

GENERAL RENO: Ms. Cornish, I said that if I've succeeded it's because of people in the community, both the people who have shown what they can do if given half a chance. UPS is here and I think you have a program that may have some applicability.

MR. CARROLL: Sure, sure. Good morning, Madam Attorney General.

GENERAL RENO: This goes to what you were talking about, sir. Let's see what we can do.

MR. CARROLL: Sure. Also to Lieutenant Governor Kennedy Townsend and our brother Elijah Cummings: My name is Rodney Carroll and I think we've pretty much got all the bases covered save one. If I was the Attorney General, I would make sure that at least half the people in this room were employers.

I have been with United Parcel Service 22 years. I was fortunate three years ago to come to the Welfare to Work Partnership. Let me tell you how this has a link, the personal context. The Welfare to Work Partnership has 22,000 companies. Over 70 of the Fortune 100 companies are part of this partnership. This partnership in the last three years has hired over 1.1 million people from welfare. So this is a very significant organization.

When I first came to the partnership, my goal was to convince companies and educate them on the stigmatism of people from welfare, because companies had an idea of who people on welfare were and therefore they either had a written or unwritten policy why they didn't want to hire them.

Now, as we begin to make dents in the welfare rolls, even though we still have a ways to go, our board met just last month at the White House and we began to talk about how the companies were beginning to hire ex-offenders. You see, now in an almost full employment economy employers are willing to listen and they're saying, well, what can we do, how can we do that.

So I would only suggest -- and we have surveys that say over 82 percent of our companies would be willing to hire ex-offenders, given the right circumstances. We need to bring the companies in in the beginning, because after the aftercare and after all the support systems and after all

the encouragement, you don't want to be dressed up and nowhere to go. You want to have the employer there that's been along with you, to take them into that job and transition their lives.

GENERAL RENO: Thank you.

I was just going to say, to point out briefly, this man has got a track record sufficient for the Congressional Black Caucus at its banquet Saturday night to recognize him amongst eight other people who have performed tremendous services. Thank you so much.

(Applause.)

MS. KENNEDY TOWNSEND: Thank you.

Just to build on what you said, we've got Debbie Photiatis from the Productivity Council now, who is working with businesses all across the state to do just what you said, to help ex-offenders come into employment. You're doing a terrific job.

But I want to thank the Attorney General for coming here today because, very frankly, each of us works very hard and it's terrific to have her serve as a catalyst to bring everybody together, to see what we're doing, to re-ignite our efforts once again to try harder, to make sure that this is a successful program. We in Maryland want this to work and thank you for your leadership.

GENERAL RENO: Maryland shows it can work. Thank you ever so much.

(Applause and, at 10:07 a.m., the roundtable was adjourned.)