



**ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO'S ADDRESS TO  
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE  
San Diego, California  
November 13, 2000  
Reported by: Renee C. Roberts, CSR No. 6910  
Attorney General Janet Reno's Address  
to the International Association of Chiefs of  
Police, taken at San Diego Convention Center,  
111 West Harbor Drive, San Diego, California, on  
the 13th day of November, 2000, at 11:20 a.m.,  
before Renee C. Roberts, CSR No. 6910.**

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO: Thank you, Colonel Robinson, and I want to congratulate you for a wonderful term as president of the IACP.

Over the last year, we have had an opportunity to discuss so many important issues. I have appreciated your war stories, your insight and your commitment to addressing the challenges of law enforcement and your willingness to work with the Department of Justice.

But it is your stories, your wisdom that has been so helpful to me. You were the one who challenged us to build on the success of community policing by focusing on problem-solving policing, and I think that has made a big difference in this year.

Over the last decade, we have seen American policing improve dramatically because of you. You have brought greater professionalism, dedication to a very complex subject.

These efforts have paid off. For the eighth consecutive year, the crime rate has fallen in virtually every category in every part of this nation. You have made America a safer, better place, and I salute you and I thank you on behalf of all of the American people.

The partnership we have had with the IACP and with individual chiefs has been very important to me. We have worked together, the Department of Justice and the IACP, to pass important legislation, such as the Brady Bill, which has already stopped more than 400,000 felons, fugitives and other prohibited people from getting guns by requiring presale background checks.

You have focused on domestic violence and made it clear that this was an issue of vital importance for all of the nation, not just for some.

You have spoken out against hate and investigated successfully hate crimes that threatened to tear the fabric of this community and this nation.

You have helped put thousands of dedicated community police officers on the streets of America and you have begun to change the face of policing.

You have given to the youth of America hope that violence will not be a part of their way of life. And you as chiefs of police have made clear that prevention is an important part of the equation of crime fighting. You have done so much in terms of bringing us in for the next century in terms of cyber crime.

And I would like to make a special note, you all have provided me, Commissioner Temney and Chief Lance Downe, with two young people from law enforcement who to me represent the future. When you can produce two White House fellows, one right after another, that I would give anything to have in the Department of Justice forever, you are making a difference in sending a signal for the professionalism and dedication of law enforcement.

But we can't rest on what we've done. We can't become complacent. For I believe we are at a moment in history when we have a unique opportunity to build safer, livable communities for our families and our children, and we must not let it pass.

But I think it is important in these very historic days that we pause to put policing in perspective. Constable Ferry has helped us do that. I have watched as representatives from emerging democracies from around the world come to call on me to talk about policing and the foundation it serves for democracy.

Policing is one of the most difficult and complex professions I know of. It is one of the most important all over the world. For police are the human face, the very essence of government that its citizens see most often.

They may go to City Hall but once in a lifetime. But as a victim, as a person who is served by police, as a suspect, as a person rescued by a heroic police officer, they are the people that these citizens see day in and day out, all over this nation. They don't see city commissioners and they don't see Congress that often. But they see you and the people you lead.

In these days we are reminded that we cannot take our democracy for granted. It is a fragile institution that we must cherish and work as hard as we can to sustain and enhance. It is a work that is vital to this land, for this government of the people, by the people and for the people is one of the most remarkable institutions that people have forged in the history of the world.

The American people, however, decided that they wanted to put limits through the rule of law as represented by our Constitution on themselves. Americans knew themselves, they knew that they are strong willed. They don't like to be told what to do. They don't like to be tread upon. Yet they cherish peace, they want safety. They want health. They want the opportunity to pursue happiness.

Think about it for a moment and what you represent in terms of democracy. The most cherished wonderful form of government that has ever been seen on this earth.

You make democracy and the rule of law work. You make the reality of our dreams come true.

As police and community work together, we see wonderful results and mutual respect. Yet we know that there are too many places in this country where we failed to or appeared to have failed to walk the line between failing our people and ensuring their safety and ensuring their well-being and that there is a wide and disturbing gulf between the police and communities in some parts of this country. Especially minority residents. Incidents and allegations of police use of excessive force and profiling have had corrosive impact on our minority communities and on law enforcement itself.

Now, feeling of distrust may be based on individual experiences which are actual. They may be based on the stories and perceptions of others, or accounts in the media. Regardless of the source, or whether one agrees with the perception or not, what matters is that these experiences and feelings are very real for too many Americans.

Furthermore, as policing has improved the expectations of the public both in terms of achieving crime prevention and in terms of what is acceptable community interaction has risen as well. This is a formula for constant progress and reform, and it is a direct consequence of the police profession's own success. But we cannot deny that the problems are there. You hear them not only from citizens but from your own officers on occasions.

So how can we accomplish what we all want to achieve? Law enforcement that not only treats our citizens fairly, equally and with respect, but gives all citizens of our country the feeling that they are being treated fairly, equally and with respect.

And how can the Department of Justice and the government of

the United States be a better partner in dealing with this problem?

My first perspective is that we cannot duck this issue. I, as the chief law enforcement officer of the federal government, have an obligation to face it and face it square on, and I have tried to do that in developing statistics concerning the application of the death penalty. I have made that information public. I have worked with others to understand it and to see what can be done to improve the statistics and to improve the information. But we can't duck from these issues.

I have faced it in terms of hiring, in terms of trying to build a diverse law enforcement representation throughout the federal government, based on excellence and based upon ability to do the job.

I have faced it very early on in my time as attorney general in terms of use of force. And I am still answering questions about that and am prepared to answer questions until I cannot do so any longer.

I have faced it with respect to profiling. We should come together because we all face these issues to develop clear policy, identifiable procedures, articulated processes, promising our best practices that will ensure not just legitimately services, but excellent policing throughout America. At not only the state and local levels, but the federal level.

But we must remember that not one size fits all, and we have to adjust and work together to figure out how we announce principles, processes and procedures that serve our purpose.

In June of 1999, President Clinton and I convened a conference on strengthening police community relations. We brought together police chiefs and police labor, civil rights advocates, community leaders and academic experts who identified police practices and reforms that can reduce police misconduct and enhance police integrity.

At the conference and in follow-up meetings we focused on several key areas, racial profiling, misleadership and accountability systems, use of force policies and practices, community recruitment and hiring. In each of these areas we have sought to work with you to identify principles for promoting police integrity. We have had some difficult conversations, and I think we have made some progress.

But we did not sufficiently consult with you in developing the principles which had been circulated, and we must do more. In the next few weeks, we will be holding a series of working sessions with police executives, police unions and civil rights groups on issues relating to promising police practices and our pattern of practice program.

This will be an opportunity for us all to sit down and work together to come up with a comprehensive approach to affecting policing, recognizing, again, that no one size fits all.

I think this is one of our most important undertakings, and I am going to dedicate as many hours as I possibly can to being a participant in these meetings and making sure that we move the ball down the road in a partnership based on mutual respect and understanding.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO: Additionally, again with your input and in partnership, we will be creating a police integrity curriculum which will be offered through the 28 Regional Community Policing Institutes across the country. The RCPI's using the police integrity curriculum will conduct training programs, exemplar police programs and community relations.

Also a follow-up to the problem solver and police integrity grant this year provided funding to five police departments to assist them in enhancing model programs to promote police integrity.

The COPS office will fund additional demonstration projects at state and local police departments on key police integrity issues. One of these police department -- once these police departments have implemented relevant model police practices, they will become demonstration sites from which other departments can learn.

But what can we do to build? And I'd like to share with you some of the principles particularly of democracy that I think will be important in our discussions to come.

First, a democracy must serve all its people. Not just some. There is a remarkable statement carved into the east wall of the Justice Building in Washington that says the common law is the will of mankind issuing from the people, the life of the people, framed by mutual confidence and sanctioned by the light of reason.

If some of the people are not part of that, they come to reject the law to become alienated and to fracture a democracy we cherish. We must serve and include all our people.

Secondly, we must focus on service, and policing must be thought of not in the concept -- and I think Tom Frasier's responsible for this -- not in the concept of the spirit of adventure, but the spirit of service.

And if you think it's going to be hard to get people interested, let me tell you otherwise. I have seen so many wonderful young men and women, middle-aged men and women -- and I'll let you in on a secret, when I leave here after I finish driving my red truck across the country, I'd like to become a police officer if I could qualify.

(Applause)

ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO: But stop to think for a moment, there is no occupation or profession that so serves the American people and, when done right, so reinforces democracy.

But applying the principles of democracy, government must be open so its people can feel that they are a part of that government. That it is indeed a government of the people, by the people and for the people. And all you have to do is look around the world to police departments that have been thought of as corrupt and see a door closed to the people who would judge it. Openness and transparency are key to a democracy.

We must be able to explain and communicate not in policese or legalese, not in Title 7s or 6s or 5s or 4s, but in small, old words of mutual respect, what we're doing and why we're doing it.

And just because we're the Attorney General of the United States or a police officer doesn't mean that we don't have a responsibility to the people that we serve to do so.

We must remember that communication is something more than words. It's the body language. And we can do so much if we train not just the young recruits coming in, but all our officers, in how important it is to come up to a situation in a careful, thoughtful, but unthreatening way in most situations.

Too often I've heard the issue arise in racial profiling cases, black man is driving down the road, he's coming back from the store. He's stopped by a police officer, takes his license, says no more and then tells him to go on. He feels like he's been stopped because he's black because nobody communicated to him, nobody told him why he was stopped.

I think we can do much more in terms of communication. And I'm pleased to note that a number of agencies are now introducing plans and programs which require officers to introduce themselves as they come up and explain why the person has been stopped.

But to communicate, we must understand how cultural stereotypes and attitudes change the meaning of words. Change what we're saying. And we must understand what we are talking about. Our communication must be clear. It must



be respectful. And it must be focused on how to solve problems.

If we come up to a problem and do nothing to solve it, we're not going to serve our people. And if we come up to it, and it involves friction and tension between our citizens, we're not going to solve it unless we focus on how our words are used in a peacemaking concept.

We must develop understanding. Again, culture, stereotypes and attitudes can affect our behavior. Does the race of a person affect an officer's perception of that person's potential dangerousness? The person's suspicion or likelihood of engaging in crime?

Cultural diversity and cultural and diversity training can be very important. But they're not done well if they spend two hours telling you why you were a racist or why you were mistaken.

There are good models out there, including diversity training provided by Nobel; additionally, the Bureau of Justice Assistance has allocated \$3 million for the development of delivery of a model cultural and diversity training at a number of police departments.

I think we can do so much if we also understand that the second principle of democracy is accountability. All law enforcement agencies, federal, state and local, from the Attorney General on down, are one of the people. Each of us is a person. We are not above others in our democracy. We are accountable to the people, and we should be accountable not just in words but in action and deeds.

This is a responsibility not only of management alone, but of rank and file officers who must join together to promote a climate of integrity, civility, accountability and responsibility.

We need to have proper systems in place for the supervision of officers for identifying potential police misconduct and for early intervention, and we must have effective systems

for accepting complaints, investigating allegations of misconduct, and imposing discipline as appropriate where misconduct is substantiated.

Have you ever had somebody come to your office after they've been sent to five different places in the city all at least one bus trip away? I've had it happen. And that does as much to undermine people's confidence in their government as anything. Let's make it open, straightforward and easily accessible for all of our people.

Third, we need to emphasize training on interaction with the public, on problem solving and on peacemaking. We've got to believe that we can train. I have watched people train to so many different situations. We can do the same here.

But in that regard, we have got to do a little bit more than training in one really important category, minorities, age of about 14 to 35. We have got to learn how to speak to them, to understand young men who want so to be involved to participate to make a difference, but don't know how to talk to police officers and, quite frankly, a lot of police officers don't know how to talk to the 15-year-old who is giving them a lot of backtalk.

Somehow or another, as I have watched these young men, they have the desire. We've got to open the door. They want to be talked to like human beings, like adults. They want to be given a pat on the back when they deserve it. They want to be given a swift talking to when they deserve that.

I think we make a mistake when we ignore the fact that the youth of America, probably more today than in any time in our history, wants some limits, wants some controls, wants some support to help them grow up. Because as they tell me, growing up in America is probably harder today than ever before in our history. They need our support.

But when they get in trouble -- Mayor Coles has talked about a very disturbing phenomenon. When they get in trouble, most of them are coming back to our communities,

and mayors across this country are supporting a reentry effort which the Department of Justice has instituted to try to focus on the 400- to 500,000 offenders who will come out each year for the next four or five years at least.

They can come out, go back to the apartment over the open-air drug market where they got into trouble in the first place. We can do nothing about it. And we'll see the crime rate start back up. We will see the jails start filling up again, and we will be told that it was just a cyclic blip in the crime rate and it had nothing to do with professional and modern policing, or we can do something else.

We can do as one chief of police did and say, "Hmm, that's not my problem," when I first mentioned it awhile back. Then looks at it and says, "Hmm, she may be right." And immediately starts attacking the problem and doing something about it.

We look forward to working with you in every way that we can. To start developing programs in the prison, whether it be for drug treatment, job training, placement, job qualifications, and getting them back to the community with representatives of the community, of the faith community, of police officers, of others giving them a chance to come back where they can succeed.

Pattern of practice. I wish I could develop a better word for it so I could start over again. We approach this issue, however, with the same sense of partnership that we have in crime fighting. We want to make sure that we have the processes and the procedures in place. We'd like to work with you in developing those. But you've got to be careful. Because you wouldn't want to conduct an investigation and have people being told that the person you're investigating is a partner with you in the investigation.

Somehow or another, we've got to solve the problem up front before we get into investigations. But if we get into them, then we need to discuss the -- to conduct them in a fair, nonarbitrary way that provides a clear signal as to what is

expected and minimizes the disruption on police departments where it happens.

We all have a responsibility to do what we can to promote this so that we minimize the need for pattern of practice investigations. We want to expand our efforts at the Justice Department to help provide the tools, the technical assistance, the resources that will assist police departments in building up trust in the community, and the Department of Justice can help in sharing promising practices that are already working in the field.

But there will be instances where a pattern of practice case needs to be brought. When that happens, we can still work cooperatively to resolve those cases fairly and expeditiously. Of course, where settlement efforts fail, I expect that the Justice Department will be prepared to proceed.

However, our record in settling all but one of these cases so far shows that cooperation is possible and that it does in fact work.

As all of you know, we've entered into consent decrees and agreements with several police departments and local law enforcement agencies. I believe that the reforms contained in these agreements are helping to improve the police departments in those jurisdictions and the services provided to the citizens in those communities. They helped restore public confidence in the police department, and they have also resulted in a decrease in some instances in civil liability for the department.

In some cases the agreements have also assisted the police department to implement practices that they otherwise would not have been able to accomplish because of fiscal or other political obstacles.

Do I think that every police department must adopt the provisions contained in these consent decrees? No. We're not trying to impose federal rules on every police department in the country.

Do I think that all officers in these departments are racist or abusive? Of course not. There are thousands and thousands and thousands of brave, honest and fair officers in every one of these cities. But our investigations show that changes in management systems were needed to ensure accountability and address misconduct.

Do all of our investigations result in litigation and consent decrees? No. We've had many matters where we closed our review without taking any action either because we did not find a pattern of police misconduct or we found that the department had already worked out the matter itself.

We have much to do in this regard. I pledge to you that I will do everything I can in the two months I've set for myself to work with you to build a partnership, to ensure proper procedures and proper notice.

And then people say, what are you going to do with it? There will be a new administration and you can't tell what's going to happen.

I have in these eight years had the opportunity to stand with Republican sheriffs and Democratic U.S. Attorneys with Republican prosecutors and myself. Crime in our communities is not a partisan issue. We had worked together to solve it in a nonpartisan, thoughtful way.

Let us work together in these days ahead, with Democrats and Republicans, with new administration representatives, no matter who they may be, to focus on policing as the most complex, most difficult profession, the profession essential to a great democracy, and let us come up with a comprehensive approach that can serve all our people, address all our needs in the most effective way possible.

We will not have a perfect document. But we can have a document that I think will be instrumental in carrying forward the successes.

When policing is done well, it brings a community together to solve problems, reduce crime and conflict, and to

inspire its citizenry.

And I say "inspire" because you have no idea what it's like to walk into a classroom and have people ignore you and start looking at the police officer who may be there with you or the law enforcement agent. "What do you do with the wire in your ear?" "May I see your gun?" "Have you ever been shot at?" And they just practically reach up and pat the officer, out of absolute admiration.

You do inspire. Policing at its best can do more than anything to frame the confidence, the mutual confidence, required of the law and bring all the people together.

Eight years ago, the crime rate was staggering in this nation. The crack epidemic had devastated communities across the country. Homicides had never been higher. People said nothing could be done about it. Look what you've done now. Think about the difference that you have made all over this country.

I think about it regularly. And that's the reason the police chiefs of America have been some of the people that I respect most and always will hold close in my heart for the heroes and heroines that you are.

(Applause)

(The proceedings adjourned at 11:52 a.m.)