



**ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO**

**REMARKS AT PORTRAIT UNVEILING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 2001**

DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL ERIC HOLDER: Please be seated. Please join me in a round of applause for the United States Border Patrol honor guard. (Applause.)

Again, I want to welcome you to the Justice Department. This is a bittersweet occasion for us. We are going to see, I'm sure, a magnificent portrait of the 78th attorney general of the United States, but unfortunately these are only done when attorneys general leave. And it is for that reason it is a sad occasion for us here at the department.

I'd like to first welcome a few distinguished guests: Justice Breyer, Justice Ginsburg, Justice O'Connor, Justice Souter, Justice White and Mrs. White, former Attorneys General Barr and Attorney General Thornburgh, who was my first boss when I came to the Justice Department as a line lawyer. From the Hill we have Senator Leahy, Congressman Frank, Senator Specter, Ms. Graham, Mrs. Kennedy. It's good to see you as well.

The attorney general, in a ceremony that we had earlier -- we formally said goodbye to her and had a number of wonderful remarks by people at the department. But we've all been eagerly anticipating the viewing of this portrait. I'm now going to introduce to you the woman whose portrait we will soon be seeing; as I said, the 78th attorney general of the United States, my colleague, my mentor, and one of my best friends, Janet Reno. (Applause.)

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you. (Sustained applause.)

Thank you. Thank you. If I've done anything worth doing, it's because of so many people in this room. And I thank you, Justices O'Connor and Souter and Ginsburg and Breyer. My dear Justice White, you and Mrs. White got me started on this great adventure on a cold March day eight years ago almost, and it is wonderful that you're back here for the end of this adventure. Senator Leahy, Senator Specter, Congressman Frank and all my friends, and my beloved family.

I love the law. I love good and caring lawyers who are advocates, who are defenders, who are problem-solvers, and who are peacemakers. I prize the cadence and the substance of the words which define the law: "Nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty or property without the due process of law."

I admire law enforcement agents who put their lives on the line to enforce the law while building trust and understanding within a community and around the world. I honor those who seek justice for all the people of this country.

Within this department, within this great institution, are more such good and caring lawyers, seekers of justice and just enforcers of the law, than any other institution that I know of anywhere in the world. In these past eight years, I have had the most wonderful opportunity that anyone could have, to work with some of the best lawyers in the country, to use the law to try to make America a better place to live.

I work with some of the most wonderful people I have ever come in contact with. It has been a team effort that is extraordinary. For people who did not know each other, we have come together and forged a team that has been through desperate times and through not so desperate times. And it has been a wonderful opportunity to serve America.

We have forged partnerships with state and local government, the private sector, schools, the public health system and private not-for-profit groups to reduce crime through balanced programs that include prevention, that

include early intervention, that make enforcement and punishment a key, and that provide re-entry programs to give people a chance to come back to the community with a positive chance for the future.

We have enforced the civil rights laws to protect those with disabilities, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and to prevent discrimination in housing and lending practices and to strike back at church arsonists. We have felt stronger communities through strategic efforts that began with Weed and Seed. We have defended the taxpayers of America, and through affirmative civil litigation, righted the wrongs against our government.

Our Office of Public Affairs has helped lead the way in opening up the processes of the Justice Department where appropriate and helping us to be more accountable to the people. Our Office of Legislative Affairs has done yeoman's duty in the last two or three years under extremely difficult circumstances.

We have accomplished a great deal. But at the same time, we have built on the accomplishment of those that came before us. And I am particularly touched and very honored that Attorneys General Thornburgh and Barr should be here today. Attorney General Thornburgh was instrumental in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which we enforce today because of his efforts.

I can remember well the day, just after Hurricane Andrew in August of 1992, when Attorney General Barr announced this new program of Weed and Seed in Miami to law enforcement. Attorney General Thornburgh worked so hard to build international networks that we build on today, and Attorney General Barr strengthened the U.S. attorneys' offices.

Ladies and gentlemen, this great, magnificent institution transcends party and it transcends in so many instances party issues. Crime and fighting crime is not a matter of Republicans or Democrats. It is a matter of common sense used the right way by caring Americans. And I think the examples that we have seen here today of issues which

transcend one administration to the other are very important for us to remember. There will be disagreements, and they should be full and frank and positive disagreements that have good and positive forms of debate about them.

I'm likewise honored that Senator Leahy is here. You were one of the first ones that started me on this. You have been a wise counselor, and I am indebted to you for your understanding and for never letting me forget what's the right thing to do, aided and abetted by Congressman Frank, who I've known for a long time. And I thank you for always reminding me what's right. (Laughter.)

But the person I've probably known longest is Senator Specter, with whom I have crossed swords this past year, but I am really very happy that you're here, because I admire you and I would hope that from this day we can go forward engaged in thoughtful debate, me from my red truck, on the outside looking in. (Laughter.) But thank you for being here.

I would like to take the occasion of this day to suggest to everyone that this institution is so strong. It is gallant. Its people are brave. They have addressed hard issues. They've tried to do it based on what they thought was right, based on the evidence and the law. And I would hope that we could go forward in good, thoughtful, positive bipartisanship that does a number of things.

One, it lets the young people of America know how important public service is, how rewarding it is. Yes, there is risk-taking in public service, but we must engage. I don't know whether he's here today, but one of my heroes is Chesterfield Smith. Is that you, Chesterfield? (Applause.) Chesterfield Smith is the hero of a generation that saw this world most at risk. Chesterfield, you have a compatriot up here. This lady, the artist, Dorothy Swain Lewis, went off to toe targets, carry bombers, teach people how to fly, and did so much as a women's Air Force service pilot.

You all are the people that set the tradition for public service for me. Let us take Adam and Cara and James and Kimberly and let them know that public service is not a war of rhetorical words but an arena of action where we get things done for the American people in the most positive way possible and where we debate in the most effective manner possible. (Applause.)

There is, on the wall of the 9th Street gate, a saying that I have come to rely on again and again. It says, "The common law derives from the will of mankind, issuing from the life of the people, framed by mutual confidence, and sanctioned by the light of reason."

Unless the law issues from all of the people, some of the people will feel left out. They will come to feel alienated. They will be angry. And this will not be a cohesive democracy. If you don't care about that, they will feel left out, alienated, and they will not have the opportunities that others have to skills, to jobs, to opportunity. That will only hurt America.

This institution and this nation must do more to recognize the diversity and the strength of the diversity of this great nation. My father came from Denmark when he was 12 years old. People teased him about his funny accent and his funny language and his funny clothes, and he never, ever forgot it. Four years later, he was the editor of the high school newspaper. Let us make sure that for all Americans, that opportunity exists.

Let us make sure that we listen to the people. Sometimes we're tone-deaf in Washington and we listen only to ourselves. We do not hear the cry of people who want answers, want action, want protection, and have some darn good ideas as to how to provide it if only we would listen. Let us not forget to hear them.

But most of all, I am reminded about how wonderful people can be. This day has been a joy -- a day of hugs, a day of tears, a day of feeling that there is one great family in this department. But there's another great family sitting

right over there. (Applause.) And for the members of the press who want to know who you talk to when the pressure is so great and you feel so lonely, will my sister and my two brothers please stand up? (Applause.)

I feel this nation is much more linked today. The person who did the portrait has known me since I was five years old, and she came home from the war to visit in South Florida. She used to sit around the campfire and play her guitar and sang "Those Brown Eyes" and other songs in the most wonderful tones and terms. She watched me grow up. She has been a friend all along the way. She still can wear her WASP uniform. (Laughter.) I don't know whether she still flies or not. But she is a wonderful artist.

And the fact that Dorothy Swain Lewis has done this portrait means more to me than I can tell you, but I will try. It means family. It means friends. It means public service. It means all the things that we hold dear in this country. And let us resolve, each one of us, in whatever form our future takes, never to stand by on the sidelines, either with our family or our public service obligations, but let us go forward and serve family and friends and this nation in the spirit of those that came before us.

Thank you all so very much. (Applause.)

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