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2  
3 RESTORE HOPE THE NAACP WAY  
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6  
7 39TH ANNUAL  
8 FIGHT FOR FREEDOM FUND DINNER.  
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10  
11 THE HONORABLE JANET RENO  
12 Attorney General of the United States  
13

14  
15 SUNDAY, MAY 1, 1994  
16 COBO CONFERENCE CENTER  
17 DETROIT, MICHIGAN  
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1 I have been in office for one year now. I  
2 have had the opportunity to travel across this nation to  
3 meet so many incredibly wonderful people, some of whom I  
4 have seen tonight. The strength that is in this room is  
5 a symbol to me of my hope, my optimism for this nation.

6 This dinner is an incredible event. It is a  
7 beacon to me of how people care, the dedication, the  
8 concern for justice, for people, as represented by the  
9 NAACP. The fact that you would be here in such force is  
10 an incredible testament to the organization and to each  
11 one of you.

12 But we must do more than just come to a  
13 dinner. We must take the energy in this room and go out  
14 and change America. We must take the energy in this  
15 room and go to our communities and change each community  
16 so that they can be safe. We must take the energy in  
17 this room and go out and give our children a healthy,  
18 safe, and positive future.

19 Now, Judge Keith said the feeling in this room  
20 can't be duplicated in our communities, and I said it's  
21 time they start trying. We are embarked on one of the  
22 most vigorous Civil Rights agendas of any  
23 administration.

24 The first thing the president did when he  
25 talked to me a little over a year ago as he decided

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1 whether to nominate me, is whether I was committed to  
2 the most vigorous enforcement of the Civil Rights laws  
3 possible, and I told him that I was, that it had to be  
4 one of the highest priorities in the department.

5 In this past month, we have seen a young man  
6 take office as Assistant Attorney General of the Civil  
7 Rights Division. Daval Patrick cut his teeth as a  
8 lawyer in the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. He served in  
9 private practice for eight years, doing 30 percent of  
10 his time for pro bono efforts to help other people.

11 Now, one month in office, he has already  
12 established himself as a great young leader, absolutely  
13 unafraid of anything, routed in the grim reality, but  
14 with a great optimism that is so refreshing and so  
15 infectious. He has a fierce resolve to advance the  
16 Civil Rights agenda of the president. He shares my  
17 hopes and dreams for a Civil Rights Division that ranks  
18 with the greatest traditions of that remarkable  
19 division; a division and a Department of Justice  
20 committed and dedicated and resolving to work with all  
21 Americans to appreciate and cherish the wonderful  
22 differences amongst us all that have made this nation so  
23 great, and to eliminate the vestiges of racism, hate,  
24 bigotry, and discrimination; to bring us all together to  
25 address together our mutual problems so that we can give

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1 all of the young people in America a better and real  
2 chance at a free and safe and positive future where  
3 their dreams can come true.

4 Working together, I am confident that we can  
5 continue to implement the kind of aggressive,  
6 far-reaching Civil Rights agenda that will make the  
7 president and you proud of our efforts. We are  
8 determined to strike hard and fast at individual  
9 instances of discrimination.

10 Last fall, the Associate Attorney General  
11 traveled to (inaudible) Texas with Henry Cicteros, the  
12 Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The only  
13 African American tenants to rent apartments in a public  
14 housing complex there had been forced out by threats of  
15 violence, some delivered by teenagers. No African  
16 American had called (inaudible) their home in more than  
17 40 years.

18 Under Bill Clinton, such atrocious  
19 discrimination will not be tolerated. Secretary  
20 Cicteros has worked to see that African American  
21 families will have a fair chance to live in decent  
22 housing environments there. Our efforts succeeded.  
23 There are now 18 African American families living  
24 there.

25 He said he will never forget the tears of joy

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1 running down the face of an African American mother who  
2 now had a place for her family, and he says that he will  
3 long remember the white families in the housing complex  
4 who came together spontaneously with coffee and kind  
5 words to welcome their new neighbors. We are going to  
6 bridge those gaps.

7 When I first talked with Daval Patrick, he and  
8 I agreed that no part of the Department of Civil Rights  
9 agenda is more important than the enforcing of the  
10 Voting Rights Act. We are determined to preserve the  
11 gains in minority representation made during recent  
12 redistricting. We are engaging in a struggle to defend  
13 those minority districts in Louisiana, North Carolina,  
14 and Texas.

15 We are also fighting discriminatory voting  
16 rights applications to stop the use of discriminatory  
17 election systems. Recently we succeeded in getting a  
18 county of Alabama to cease resistance to adopting the  
19 government majority district after the county had  
20 refused to do so for racially discriminatory reasons.

21 Finally, our objections under Section Five of  
22 the Voting Rights Act are effectively stopping  
23 discriminatory voting changes throughout the south and  
24 southwest. In just the last three months, we have  
25 objected to discriminatory methods of electing judges in

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1 Alabama, Arizona, and North Carolina.

2 The Department of Justice also has made a top  
3 priority the enforcement of laws banning lending  
4 discrimination. We have worked with the Housing and --  
5 the Department of Housing and Urban Development and  
6 financial regulatory agents to develop and implement an  
7 effective enforcement program. With the Federal Trade  
8 Commission, the Department achieved a major voluntary  
9 compliance to end mortgage lending discrimination  
10 practices.

11 We also won significant victories in cases  
12 involving financial institutions in Georgia,  
13 Mississippi, and South Dakota, helping rebuild  
14 communities and prevent and determine there will be no  
15 discrimination in making credit available to all  
16 Americans.

17 In 1993, the Department brought a record 120  
18 lawsuits alleging violations to the Fair Housing Act.  
19 The Department's programming to detect unlawful housing  
20 discrimination by using testers has greatly increased  
21 the effectiveness of our anti housing -- anti housing  
22 discrimination efforts.

23 We began our testing program here in Detroit.  
24 We worked with the Fair Housing Center in metropolitan  
25 Detroit, and through a joint project, conducted a test

1 in suburban Detroit. The result, we filed six cases  
2 charging landlords with race discrimination. The  
3 strength of the testing evidence has enabled us to  
4 obtain substantial monetary damages for the victims of  
5 discrimination and to obtain record civil penalties.

6 Justice Department lawyers recently won an  
7 emergency court order prohibiting the city of Wildwood,  
8 New Jersey from enforcing a law that keeps Hispanic  
9 families out of the community. Last year the Justice  
10 Department filed suit against the Chicago suburb of  
11 Cicero. We are committed to assisting cities and towns  
12 to use their powers to prevent individuals, based on  
13 their family status, race, or natural origin, from  
14 occupying rental property that is large enough to  
15 accommodate their families, and we are dedicated to  
16 making sure that the laws of this nation that protect  
17 our frail and fragile environment are enforced in every  
18 community, in minority communities and communities that  
19 have until now not had a voice to see that their air and  
20 their land and water are protected.

21 But I ask you tonight to focus with me on a  
22 special issue, an issue that I think is the most violent  
23 in all America, the problem of youth violence. What  
24 good will it be to make sure that our laws are enforced  
25 to prevent discrimination if a young person is shot down

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1 at 13? What good will it be to provide equal education  
2 opportunities if a young person doesn't have the chance  
3 to grow to adulthood?

4 The greatest single crime problem in America  
5 today is youth violence. The greatest single public  
6 health problem today is youth violence. Our young  
7 people are being killed and they are killing. They are  
8 bent by a criminal justice system that does not open a  
9 door in too many instances to a safe, strong, positive  
10 start after the punishment has been imposed.

11 Ladies and gentlemen, I have in this past year  
12 heard some people say we've lost a generation, and to  
13 that I say never. I ask you to take the energy in this  
14 room and say in Detroit, and throughout this nation,  
15 never give in to such a statement. Never give up on any  
16 one of our young people. Never stop trying to give them  
17 a future. Let us work together, child by child, family  
18 by family, block by block, until we can ensure that  
19 there is indeed justice for all.

20 It is not an easy job. It takes us coming  
21 together, the federal government forming a partnership  
22 with the city of Detroit, a city that knows far better  
23 than Washington what the needs and resources of this  
24 community are, and trying to develop programs that come  
25 to Detroit in ways that Detroit can use them.

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1           It means all of us joining in a partnership  
2 between the NAACP, business organizations, who are  
3 partners here with you tonight, to make the difference.  
4 It means police and social workers and child development  
5 experts and doctors and neighborhood leaders and young  
6 people coming together to focus on the problem of  
7 violence, and the commitment that we can do something  
8 about it, but what it means most is putting people  
9 first.

10           We have a president who trusts people enough  
11 to hold them accountable, to trust people enough to know  
12 that if they have the tools to do the job, they can  
13 become self-sufficient and lead constructive lives.

14           Where do we begin? I often say we must begin  
15 at the beginning, as a child is born, but we cannot let  
16 go of these youngsters who are in trouble. We cannot  
17 let go the teenager or the 25 year old who has come out  
18 of prison. We must make a difference now, and where do  
19 we start?

20           Ladies and gentlemen, I ask the NAACP to join  
21 me in trying to focus this nation's attention on  
22 domestic violence. Unless we end violence in the home,  
23 we will never end it in the communities and the streets  
24 of America. A child that watches his father beat his  
25 mother comes to accept violence as a way of life. The

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1 best place to start is in the home.

2 We must make sure that judges, police  
3 officers, and prosecutors, and all concerned, including  
4 doctors, understand the terrible cycle that domestic  
5 violence perpetuates in our youth, and begin to come  
6 together and start treating it as a public health  
7 problem and a criminal justice problem, developing  
8 centers where we can focus on it, work with the offender  
9 and victim to end this whole terrible cycle. Ministers  
10 and doctors must be in partnership with city officials,  
11 with police officers and court officials, to make a  
12 difference. We can do it.

13 Let us come together to tell the media that  
14 television can be a wonderful, wonderful tool for  
15 educating our young people. It can also be a tool for  
16 perpetuating violence. Let us send the message to the  
17 media. Let us send the message that we don't want to  
18 regulate, we just want people to understand that we  
19 would like to see something entertaining, nice, and  
20 nonviolent on television, and an awful lot of education  
21 can go into that too.

22 Let us tell the politicians of America that  
23 the time has come to do something about assault weapons,  
24 and let us get the ban on assault weapons passed. These  
25 weapons have no use but to kill people. They are not

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1 used for sporting purposes and they perpetuate the  
2 climate of violence.

3 I have had the opportunity to meet with  
4 (inaudible), and I have talked with him again tonight,  
5 saying how much I want to continue to meet with him to  
6 talk about the problems of violence. The one thing  
7 we've got to learn is what do we do with that youngster  
8 who has committed a violent crime? What do we do with  
9 the youngster who has put the gun up beside somebody's  
10 head? We've got to let them know that there's going to  
11 be a fair, firm, sanction that fits the crime, but that  
12 it will be equitably carried out and everybody will be  
13 treated the same based on the same type of crime and  
14 their prior record, and that it will be a real  
15 punishment that has meaning, but that it will be a fair  
16 punishment.

17 It makes no sense to take a 14 year old who  
18 has committed a robbery and put them in with hardened  
19 criminals or older people who are just going to teach  
20 them how to commit better robberies when they come out.  
21 We've got to work together to develop plans and programs  
22 that let them know they can't do it again, and give them  
23 an opportunity for the future.

24 We need to make sure that our criminal justice  
25 systems throughout this country reflect the diversity of

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1 America. Nine United States attorneys, including Judge  
2 Keith, pointed out their own Saul Green represents that  
3 diversity of civil prosecutors now. There is greater  
4 diversity in the appointments that the president has  
5 made to the federal bench than ever before. We are  
6 providing for internships to urge young people who might  
7 not otherwise have a chance to pursue a legal career to  
8 give them an opportunity to know what the law is about  
9 and how they may be involved.

10 But ladies and gentlemen, the best designed  
11 punishment system in the world won't work if we take the  
12 child from the center where they have been and return  
13 them to the open-air drug market, and the apartment  
14 where they live is over the open-air drug market, and we  
15 don't follow up. We have got to provide community care  
16 and support for that offender when he comes back to the  
17 community; continuing to address the problem of drugs,  
18 continuing to work on job training and placement,  
19 teaching that youngster work ethics, giving them the  
20 skills that they need to become constructive citizens in  
21 the community, teaching them about parenting. Many of  
22 these young people are already parents.

23 I have seen programs in prisons that have been  
24 remarkably successful. We can make that difference.  
25 Let us consider alternative housing sites. Let us join

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1 together with the NAACP and take the energy in this room  
2 and create some housing apartments where young people  
3 can come knowing they will be supervised and where they  
4 will be drug free and violence free. Let us work  
5 together in terms of reaching out to youngsters in  
6 prison as they come out of prison to help them come out,  
7 disassociated and unaffiliated with the gangs that  
8 caused them to go in in the first place, but let us  
9 realize that most of the young people who are in trouble  
10 today are not bad people, they just need to have their  
11 friends and community and family woven around them.

12 But we cannot forget, when we talk about  
13 youngsters, we cannot forget the overoffender age 17 to  
14 30. We must give them a chance to know that if they  
15 work with us in job training and placement  
16 opportunities, there can be a future. It is easier said  
17 than done, but unless we go forth from here, committed  
18 not only to having the best possible dinner in the  
19 world, the biggest dinner in the world, but take the  
20 energy from this dinner and start applying it to young  
21 people, then we can make a difference.

22 When I go to a community, I talk to youngsters  
23 who have been in trouble, who are in trouble and in  
24 detention facilities, and I ask them what could have  
25 been done to prevent the crime in the first place? Two

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1 poignant answers come back:

2           Something to do in the afternoons and  
3 evenings, an elementary school that could have kept me  
4 from getting in with the wrong crowd, and somebody to  
5 talk to. Somebody who understands how hard it is to  
6 grow up. Somebody who punished me when I deserved it,  
7 but did it right, and somebody who gave me a pat on the  
8 back when I deserved it.

9           Ladies and gentlemen, we can't give up on  
10 kids. We can't excuse it because we don't have money.  
11 If you took the 10,000 people that are estimated to be  
12 in this room, and each person adopted a block, adopted a  
13 school, adopted a class, or just became the mentor for  
14 one child who was at risk, think about what we could do  
15 in terms of addressing those problems.

16           We can volunteer, we can make a difference, we  
17 can make sure that scouting is an opportunity for all  
18 young people, or that they have opportunities in after  
19 school and evening programs. We can do so much if we  
20 take it child by child, family by family. And it will  
21 not help if we just address the child's needs. We must  
22 address the family's needs as a whole.

23           Think of what would happen if the young and  
24 successful people in this room started doing public  
25 service announcements about what they had done to get

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1 where they are. I have heard more great success stories  
2 in America, living success stories of people who had  
3 overcome tremendous odds. For too many children, these  
4 seem like distant fairy tales. We can, through public  
5 service announcements, make these successes real and  
6 possible for all the children in America, but we cannot  
7 wait until a child is in school. We've got to start  
8 early, as the child is born, by ensuring strong and  
9 healthy parents, by providing proper preventive medical  
10 care, by providing infant care, by giving our children a  
11 chance to come into a world with a positive chance of  
12 success. We have got to give all of our children a  
13 chance.

14           Daval Patrick was born on the south side of  
15 Chicago, next door to the Robert Taylor Home. He lived  
16 with his mother and grandmother, and I will never forget  
17 as long as I live as he was sworn in in the great hall  
18 of the Justice Department, he asked two women to stand  
19 up, they were his 6th and 8th grade teacher, and he had  
20 the opportunity to publicly thank, one for making him  
21 know that he was special, and the second, the 8th grade  
22 teacher, for sensing that he was special and introducing  
23 him to the Better Chance Program that gave him a  
24 scholarship to Milton Academy, and then he went on to  
25 Harvard College and Harvard Law School.

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1 Ladies and gentlemen, we owe it to the  
2 children of America to give every single one of them a  
3 better chance.  
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