

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

1994 COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

CORAL GABLES, FLORIDA

FRIDAY, MAY 13, 1994

ADDRESS OF JANET RENO

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Page 1

1 MS. RENO: Thank you, Mr. President. I am so  
2 honored to be with you and with your families as you start  
3 on a new and great adventure. From this University and  
4 this place where you have lived or came to learn, you will  
5 draw strength and courage that will last you for the rest  
6 of your life. This is a great University. It has been  
7 part and parcel of my life for all of my life. I love it  
8 more than the institutions that I went to myself. It is a  
9 University in a city both that are symbols to me of the  
10 future, the strength and the hope that is America.

11 Think of this community that surrounds this  
12 great University. In 1896 it published its first  
13 newspaper. The newspaper editorialized that we now have  
14 1500 people, we should incorporate and now look at what  
15 Miami is today in less than a century.

16 In 1926 this University opened its doors one  
17 month late because of a disastrous hurricane. It went  
18 through the hurricane, it went through depression, it went  
19 through war and look what it is today.

20 As a child I would take a buggy down the Dixie  
21 Highway because we had run out of gas rationing tickets  
22 and didn't have enough for gas and I would look over at  
23 what is now this building and see a concrete steel  
24 skeleton against the sky, a skeleton that was never  
25 finished because of the depression and then the war and

Page 2

1 now look what the people who have come before you have  
2 built.

3 But it was more than just brick and mortar. In  
4 about 1929 there was a 15-year old child who came to this  
5 University as a rather precocious one. She decided to run  
6 away from home in the process. There was a great  
7 headline, "Three UM Girls Missing, Foul Play Feared."

8 Well, she just run away for the heck of it, for  
9 a great adventure.

10 She came back and the University threatened  
11 suspension. She went in to see Dr. Ashe and Dr. Ashe gave  
12 her another chance. She was my mother, who for the rest  
13 of her life -- for the rest of her life would quote from  
14 Molly Column who gave a guest lecture series here, a lady  
15 who would talk about physics that she'd majored in, a lady  
16 who learned how to build a house because of much of what  
17 she learned in that physics course, a lady who one day  
18 told me as a child that she was going to build a house and  
19 we said, "What do you know about building a house? She  
20 said, "I'm gonna learn" and she talked to brick masons and  
21 to electricians and plumbers and she learned how to build  
22 a house and out in what is now Kendall she dug the  
23 foundation with her own hands, with a pick and shovel, she  
24 laid the block, she put in the wiring and the plumbing and  
25 my father helped her with the heavy work at night. That

Page 3

**ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY, INC.**

(202)289-2260 / (800) FOR DEPO

1111 14th ST., N.W., 4th FLOOR / WASHINGTON, D.C., 20005

1 house --

2 She and I lived in that house until she died  
3 just before I came to Washington and each time I drive  
4 down the Driveway of the State Attorney with a difficult  
5 problem and come around through the woods and see that  
6 house standing there, it was a symbol to me that you can  
7 do anything that you really want to if it's the right  
8 thing to do and you put your mind to it.

9 That house taught me another lesson. On the  
10 night, the morning that Andrew hit, at 3 o'clock in the  
11 morning, she got up, old and frail and dying, and she sat  
12 down in her chair and she folded her hands and as the  
13 winds began to howl, she sat there totally unafraid  
14 because she knew how she had built that house. As trees  
15 crashed around the house, she didn't mind at all. As we  
16 went out that gray dawn into that disaster, it looked like  
17 a World War 1 battlefield but the house had lost one  
18 shingle and some screens, a symbol that you build it the  
19 right way, you don't cut corners, you put in good  
20 materials, you make a difference.

21 This great University, that house are symbols  
22 to me of what you can do if you put your mind to it. They  
23 have given me such strength as I embarked on a great  
24 adventure in this past year, but as I walk the streets of  
25 Washington early in the morning, thinking and putting

Page 4

**ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY, INC.**

(202)289-2260 / (800) FOR DEPO  
1111 14th ST., N.W., 4th FLOOR / WASHINGTON, D.C., 20005

1 things in prospective, as I dealt with the terrible stark  
2 tragedy of Waco, as I stand in the Oval Office finding  
3 myself talking to the President of the United States, it  
4 all seems sometimes like a dream. The brick and mortar  
5 fade and something else remains. It is not the skyline of  
6 a city that I see but it is a place, a beautiful sky, the  
7 greenness of South Florida, the magnificence of this land.  
8 It is not a building that I see but the people of this  
9 community who over time have embraced me, fussed at me,  
10 cussed at me and loved me and have sent me on my way.

11 The Merrick Building phase -- and it is not a  
12 University of brick and mortar, it is of people and  
13 principles and ideas. It is the law student who  
14 challenged me as I talked to his class, it's the professor  
15 who took me to task, it is the medical school doctor who  
16 taught me about child development, who taught me that we  
17 will never be able to build enough prisons if we wait  
18 until 18 years after a child is born.

19 It is a dean that sent me on the way to this  
20 great adventure. It is not a house that I remember but it  
21 is a voice saying as I walked into that house, "Hello, my  
22 darling, I love you."

23 Let us go forth today, I go forth because this  
24 University and its people and its principles give me  
25 strength. They have given you strength. Go forth today

1 and first let us remember to preserve the land and the sea  
2 and the sky that we love. Make sure that you hand down to  
3 your children and your grandchildren a place in which they  
4 can build a city with a sky as clear as this, with trees  
5 that grow, with land that can be lived in. It is  
6 difficult. We talk about protecting the environment but  
7 there are so many conflicting interests and it is going to  
8 require every bit of negotiation skill that you have but  
9 it is going to be required of each and every one of us.

10 Preserve the principles and the ideas and the  
11 opportunity that this University has given you to  
12 stimulate others and to think and to challenge yourselves.

13 I will always remember, all of my life, and  
14 there is a mural on the wall of my conference room at the  
15 Department of Justice that we must stand now against  
16 tyranny, hatred and bigotry. Adolph Hitler lived in my  
17 lifetime. The world is not getting better, it will get  
18 worse unless each one of us draws a very clear line and  
19 says, "You will not walk across it if you pervade hatred,  
20 bigotry and tyranny in this world." Each individual must  
21 make a difference.

22 As I visited Germany when I was 13 and asked  
23 people who seemed like such kind people how it could  
24 happen, they didn't know. Let us make sure we know and  
25 that we prevent such tyranny for the future. Let us

Page 6

**ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY, INC.**

(202)289-2260 / (800) FOR DEPO  
1111 14th ST., N.W., 4th FLOOR / WASHINGTON, D.C., 20005

1 cherish people, not automation, not buildings, not  
2 technology, but people and let us invest in our children.

3 That medical school, that wonderful, wonderful  
4 medical school taught me that unless we start worrying  
5 about crack involved babies we won't be able to build the  
6 prisons, we won't have the work force with the skills  
7 necessary to fill the jobs, we won't be having health care  
8 institutions that can manage to stay above water unless we  
9 invest in preventative medical care and health care, in  
10 child care, in a future for our children, but let us  
11 remember always that it starts at home.

12 If you had told me back in 1960 that I couldn't  
13 go to law school because I was a woman, I would have been  
14 very angry and I would be angrier today, but ladies and  
15 gentlemen, I hope your future will be one where you can  
16 have all the professional involvement that you want while  
17 at the same time having work places, law firms and  
18 wherever you go, institutions that put family and children  
19 first.

20 I remember my afternoons after school, when she  
21 wasn't building the house, my mother taught us to play  
22 baseball, to appreciate Beethoven symphonies, she taught  
23 us to play fair, she spanked us, she loved us with all her  
24 heart and there is no child care in the world that will  
25 ever be a substitute for that lady in our life. Surely if

Page 7

**ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY, INC.**

(202)289-2260 / (800) FOR DEPO  
1111 14th ST., N.W., 4th FLOOR / WASHINGTON, D.C., 20005

1 we can send a man to the moon we can develop work place  
2 technology that will give us, your generation, time to  
3 spend quality time with your children.

4 But we have an extraordinary challenge. As I  
5 come to Washington I see a world that has become global in  
6 nature, a global economy, global migration, crime, health  
7 care, health problems and environmental problems are now  
8 global in nature. We are faced with an opportunity. We  
9 have a technology that can do so much, that can bring us  
10 together in seconds but that technology is also an  
11 instrument of disaster. And yet as we have such  
12 opportunity and challenge, we also face so many people  
13 around this world reaching back in time, looking for their  
14 roots, looking for wince they came, taking pride in their  
15 tribal and ethnic traditions but as they reach back, they  
16 see, too often see the hatred and bigotry that divide the  
17 tribes and ethnic groups.

18 If we are to live in this world, we have got to  
19 understand that we all are one and we must all go forth  
20 from this great University understanding that it will be  
21 our mission to bring understanding amongst all people,  
22 whether it be in the neighborhood, the community, the  
23 nation or the world and to bring peace to all.

24 Godspeed to each and every one of you.  
25