

1 MAPPING THE DISTANCE HOME
2 THE 1994 NATIONAL CASA CONFERENCE

3 May 21 - 24, 1994

4 Tampa, Florida

5
6
7
8 EXCERPT FROM RECOGNITION BANQUET

9 PRESIDING: HELEN LEONHART-JONES

10 NCASAA President

11 GUEST SPEAKER: JANET RENO

12 Attorney General

13
14
15
16 DATE: Sunday, May 22, 1994

17 PLACE: Hyatt Regency Westshore

18 6200 Courtney Campbell Causeway

19 Tampa, Florida 33607

20 TIME: Excerpt beginning at 9:10 p.m.

21 REPORTED BY: JANET HAMILTON, RPR

22 Court Reporter

23 Notary Public

24 State of Florida at Large

25

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

2 MS. LEONHART-JONES: And we've come
3 to yet another special point in our
4 program. To say that we are honored that
5 our next guest was able to join us this
6 evening is probably a tremendous
7 understatement.

8 When we first learned that Janet Reno
9 had been appointed as the Attorney General
10 of the United States, many of us felt a
11 moment of joy and hope; because we knew
12 that her commitment to children's issues
13 has always been there. Ms. Reno's
14 commitment comes from what I would call a
15 true place within herself. And,
16 consequently, she accepts no compromise.

17 We were also heartened that someone
18 who is known to roll up her sleeves and
19 get into the thick of things and just get
20 the job done would be working on a
21 national level on juvenile justice issues;
22 someone who could empathize with CASA's
23 movement and CASA's commitment to put a
24 child at the forefront of the society.

25 One of the most impressive facts

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1 about Ms. Reno's work is that she
2 approaches the whole picture. She
3 understands the complex factors that cause
4 problems for children and for families,
5 and she believes in getting at the roots;
6 emphasizing prevention rather than after-
7 the-fact bandaging. Floridians have long
8 known her as an advocate and a supporter
9 of their Guardian ad Litem program. And
10 we at the National CASA Association also
11 welcome her support for all of the
12 volunteers and program staff advocating on
13 behalf of our country's abused and
14 neglected children.

15 Ladies and gentlemen, may I present
16 the Attorney General of the United States,
17 Ms. Janet Reno.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. RENO: Thank you so very much.

20 People have said, as I came in this
21 evening, "Thank you for what you do.
22 Thank you for what you have done for
23 children." But I am not the one to be
24 thanked. You are the heros and the
25 heroines. You are the people who, day in

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1 and day out, take the most difficult
2 issues that anyone can possibly deal with
3 and try your best to perfect a solution,
4 knowing that it may not be right,
5 sometimes failing, and watching the
6 tragedy of failure of something so young
7 and so vulnerable and so fragile. And
8 yet, you never give up. You keep coming
9 back. You come back to the bench the next
10 morning. You come back to your case the
11 next day. You come back to your office
12 the next day. All of you keep coming
13 back, day in and day out.

14 There is nothing so difficult as to
15 try to give an abused or neglected child a
16 future, a future of hope. And on behalf
17 of all Americans, I salute you with every
18 force that I can bring to bear. You
19 deserve it. You are perfectly wonderful.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. RENO: I know from experience.
22 It was wonderful as I walked in to see
23 representatives of the Guardian ad Litem
24 program who had fussed at me, fumed at me
25 sometimes, encouraged me, supported me,

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1 helped me, and been valiant allies in
2 trying to make this a better world for the
3 children of Dade County.

4 (Applause.)

5 MS. RENO: I have a challenge for us
6 all tonight. Talking to Dave Soukup, he
7 mentioned that it was 17 years ago that
8 this network got started. Lois Brown --
9 and bless you for all your efforts --
10 referred to it as a mighty network. Tools
11 of hope, beginnings -- new beginnings.
12 But you know better than anybody else how
13 difficult the problem is and the fact that
14 America has waited for the crisis to occur
15 rather than engaging in prevention.

16 If you can take the energy I felt as
17 I walked down into this crowd tonight, if
18 you can take the energy that has caused
19 you to spread across the nation in a
20 mighty, wonderful, remarkable effort, and
21 start galvanizing America's communities
22 into one comprehensive program that can
23 prevent the problem in the first place, we
24 will have done even more to give our
25 children a new and fresh future.

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1 The problem will not be solved from
2 Washington. It will not be solved from
3 the state capitols. The children's future
4 in America is going to be addressed in the
5 neighborhoods and in the communities of
6 America.

7 You see the abuse. You see the
8 neglect. And as you do your research and
9 as you understand how it happened, you see
10 three or four different points along the
11 way where intervention could have
12 prevented the problem in the first place.
13 Those who have to deal with delinquency
14 pick up the presentence investigation and
15 see points along the way where a
16 difference could have been made. And yet
17 this nation too often waits for the crisis
18 to occur, waits for the tragedy of crisis,
19 waits for the dollars the crisis costs us,
20 when we could have done it up front in so
21 many different situations and done it
22 better and used our dollars far more
23 wisely.

24 (Applause.)

25 MS. RENO: So as judge, as volunteer,

1 as attorney general, as all of us who
2 care, let us become advocates for a larger
3 issue as well. Let us not let up on
4 CASA's basic mission one whit; but let us
5 explain to America that, unless we start
6 investing in our children early on, we
7 will never have enough prisons 15 years
8 from now, we will never have enough CASA
9 programs 3 and 4 years from now, our
10 healthcare institutions will be brought to
11 their knees. And if people won't
12 understand us from that point of view,
13 explain to them that we are not going to
14 have a work force with the skills that can
15 fill the jobs that can maintain America as
16 a first-rate nation.

17 You see the results of neglect. You
18 see the results of our failure to
19 intervene early. Let us speak out and
20 create a mighty network in every community
21 in America that is based on certain
22 principles.

23 First of all, prevention rather than
24 crisis.

25 Secondly, a recognition that

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1 everybody has got to come together.

2 The days are over when the judge did
3 it by himself. That judge sat there one
4 morning and said, "I need some help." And
5 the police officer reaches beyond to go to
6 the schoolteacher. And the schoolteacher
7 reaches out to the public health nurse.
8 And the public health nurse reaches out to
9 a doctor who is willing to volunteer his
10 time. And suddenly that network becomes
11 involved in the community so that it can
12 make a difference.

13 I challenged the Washington Lawyers
14 Committee on Civil Rights to stop focusing
15 just on winning the battle in the
16 courtroom and to go out and start adopting
17 a block -- a block where they could
18 provide legal services that could
19 intervene early, solve the problem with
20 the landlord, solve the hole in the street
21 in front that caused the accidents that
22 the residents could never get changed
23 because they didn't feel enfranchised,
24 they didn't feel they had an advocate --
25 pointing out that you can do so much if

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1 you start early and keep people out of
2 court.

3 Last Saturday, I went to a school
4 that I had adopted in Washington D.C.
5 I've been going to that school about once
6 every two weeks since September. I walked
7 into that school and I couldn't believe
8 it, because a Washington law firm had
9 organized itself in one day, come in
10 there, organized the children, organized
11 parents, had all the people from the law
12 firm there painting the building, planting
13 new plants, cleaning it up. The place
14 looked breathtakingly different. But it
15 was the neighborhood that was there as
16 well. People coming together, again, as
17 part of one network that can build into a
18 mighty network where we take back our
19 neighborhoods and our communities and
20 reweave the fabric of society around our
21 children for good.

22 (Applause.)

23 MS. RENO: But we must develop a
24 continuum as we approach the effort. It
25 will do no good for us to provide

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1 marvelous programs for early childhood
2 only to leave our children unattended
3 after school and in the evenings. It will
4 do no good to have the best Headstart
5 program in the world if we can't backup
6 our teachers and give them the tools to do
7 the job. We have got to develop a
8 continuum.

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. RENO: You are examples of what
11 can be done through volunteering.

12 America wants to volunteer.

13 Sometimes they don't know how. It's easy
14 to volunteer in one situation, but they
15 don't know how to do it in others. We've
16 got to show America how easy it is to
17 volunteer.

18 My favorite story was of the 84-year-
19 old gentleman who turned to me one
20 morning. And he says, "Do you know what I
21 do three mornings a week for three hours
22 each morning?"

23 I said, "No."

24 He said, "I volunteer as a teacher's
25 aide."

1 And a young woman was with him. And
2 she stood up. And she said, "The gifted
3 kids can't wait for their time with him
4 because he challenges them far more than I
5 can with the class size that I have. And
6 the kids with learning disabilities can't
7 wait for their time with him."

8 Every single American can make a
9 difference. We have just simply got to
10 show them how.

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. RENO: Charlotte Lopez is a
13 symbol of something else that we must do
14 as we create this mighty network of
15 community around our children, and that is
16 listen to our young people. They are so
17 wise. They understand.

18 (Applause.)

19 MS. RENO: This past week, I appeared
20 before a senate committee. The senators
21 asked me to go ahead of the children who
22 had already started. And I said, "No.
23 They have far more to tell you than I do.
24 Listen to them."

25 (Applause.)

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1 MS. RENO: And then let's figure out
2 how to leverage the foundations in the
3 Justice Department and the Department of
4 Health and Human Services and education
5 and state agencies and private foundations
6 and businesses and show them step by step
7 what we can do if we bring a community
8 together and then how do we do it.

9 The community best starts assessing
10 its own needs and resources, not
11 Washington coming to town saying, "Here.
12 You can have this grant if you meet our
13 conditions, because we know better."

14 (Laughter.)

15 MS. RENO: I hope those days are
16 over. If you ever catch us doing it, the
17 Department of Justice, let me know.

18 (Laughter.)

19 MS. RENO: But I have been so proud
20 of the Office of Juvenile Justice and
21 Delinquency Prevention. And, Lois, you do
22 us all proud. And it is so wonderful to
23 see how that office is reaching out,
24 trying to be a partner with communities
25 throughout America in providing expertise

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1 when it's needed and trying to exchange
2 information and to try and do it the right
3 way.

4 But then let's start with the
5 continuum that we talked about. And the
6 first thing we should do as we build this
7 mighty network of community is make sure
8 that our parents are old enough, wise
9 enough, and financially able enough to
10 take care of their children. This nation
11 must focus on teen pregnancy and do
12 something about it.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. RENO: Let us start focusing on
15 how we teach parenting skills. Has it
16 ever bothered you that we require all
17 sorts of coursework for somebody to
18 graduate from high school, but we don't
19 teach them how to be parents?

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. RENO: Just think of what we
22 could do. I have now watched these
23 programs work. We can make a difference.
24 We can make a difference through healthy-
25 start programs that provide for home

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1 visits for new mothers who have not
2 learned, who do not have an extended
3 family from which they can learn. We can
4 make such a difference.

5 If we start looking at our
6 workplaces, whether it be the Department
7 of Justice or a business, and start
8 putting children and family first in the
9 workplace so that parents can work and at
10 the same time have quality time with their
11 children -- There are exciting programs
12 underway in America now that provide for
13 telecommuting. We have got to make people
14 understand how important those early
15 months of life are, how important it is
16 for appropriate parental leave, how
17 important it is for parents to be able to
18 care for their children when they are ill.
19 And we have got to convince American
20 business that the investment we make in
21 the time that parents spend with their
22 children is only going to rebound to the
23 benefit of the American economy in the
24 long run, if that's all they care about.

25 (Applause.)

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1 MS. RENO: We've got to focus on the
2 problem of domestic violence. You, in
3 every case that you have ever looked at,
4 probably see the shadow of domestic
5 violence fall across the case.

6 An incidence of domestic violence
7 occurs every 15 seconds in America. It is
8 the most frequent crime in America. But
9 unless we start doing something about
10 violence in the home, we will never
11 eliminate violence against our children or
12 violence on the streets or violence in our
13 schools. The child who watches his mother
14 being beaten by his father comes to accept
15 violence as a way of life.

16 We can do so much if the criminal
17 justice system starts joining with the
18 public health system in recognizing that
19 it is not only a criminal justice problem,
20 it is a public health problem.

21 If we take this mighty network and
22 start getting to the emergency rooms and
23 to the family physicians, pointing out to
24 them that they cannot just sew up the
25 wound and put in stitches and send that

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1 patient away, they've got something more
2 to do. And that is to refer for
3 counseling, try to find out what caused
4 the problem in the first place, and do
5 something about it.

6 And courts have got to work with the
7 physicians in terms of developing programs
8 that provide for intervention. Using the
9 criminal justice system is the leverage
10 that can make a difference in terms of
11 getting people to accept the intervention
12 that is so necessary.

13 And we have got to focus on the fact
14 that so much of this arises as the result
15 of alcohol and drug abuse. We have got to
16 continue our efforts in terms of substance
17 abuse in this country, in terms of our law
18 enforcement efforts; but we have all got
19 to recognize that there is a desperate
20 need for treatment, both for alcohol and
21 substance abuse, and that this nation
22 better face up to it as a good investment.

23 It makes no sense in this nation to
24 know that if a fellow had five stiff
25 drinks tonight and drove up I-4 and ran

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1 into two cars, killed three people, and
2 broke his two arms, his two arms would be
3 set tonight someplace in Hillsborough
4 County at the taxpayers' expense if he
5 didn't have the dollars to have it done or
6 the insurance. Surely, we ought to be
7 able to provide to people who need it and
8 who are demanding it and who are pleading
9 for it, drug treatment. It will only save
10 us from the tragedy of violence, the
11 tragedy of death, and the tragedy of
12 losing somebody we love. We have got to
13 move ahead in that regard.

14 There is so much that we can do about
15 teaching vulnerable parents how to be good
16 parents. One of the most encouraging
17 programs that I have seen is a program at
18 a New York state correctional facility
19 where the nursery is in the prison. Now,
20 some prison officials say that's not the
21 best way to do it, but I haven't seen a
22 better way at this point; because you
23 looked at the children in that nursery,
24 you looked at the child development
25 experts teaching those parents how to be

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1 good parents, you heard those parents tell
2 you that they had lost children on the
3 outside because of abuse and neglect and
4 that they had learned so much through this
5 program and they were going to be better,
6 more capable parents down the road. Let
7 us use every opportunity we can to seek
8 out the vulnerable parents early on and do
9 something. And that's going to require
10 that we open up the doors of America
11 again.

12 About four years ago, I chaired a
13 social service task force for the governor
14 of Florida. We held hearings throughout
15 the state of Florida, from Pensacola to
16 Miami. And what struck me so much were
17 the public health nurses and what they
18 could do. And one said that she had been
19 a public health nurse for 30 years. And
20 she was just eloquent in this hearing.
21 She said, "I used to go knock on the door.
22 Go in. Sit down. Have a cup of coffee
23 with the new mother. Explain to her what
24 to expect. Talk to her about formula.
25 Talk to her about nurturing. But I'm

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1 afraid to go now."

2 There are too many instances of abuse
3 just waiting to happen, of neglect
4 fomenting in homes, that are behind doors
5 that nobody knows about; where -- if we
6 could reach out and start rebuilding
7 community in our neighborhoods with public
8 health nurses and police officers linked
9 together as a team with a social worker,
10 making home visits, talking with people,
11 getting to know the neighborhood, building
12 the neighborhood, using community
13 activists and allies in the community
14 could do so much -- we could make such a
15 significant difference.

16 What you have done with these cases
17 can be magnified again and again and again
18 through prevention. If you take the
19 energy that has created this extraordinary
20 chain of CASAs across the country and put
21 it into communities throughout this
22 nation, think of what we can do.

23 But we must do more. We must make
24 sure that every child in America has
25 proper health care. Something is terribly

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1 wrong with a nation that says to a person
2 who is 70 years of age, "You can have an
3 operation that extends your life
4 expectancy by three years," but turns to
5 the child of a working poor person and
6 says, "Sorry. You make too much money to
7 be eligible for Medicaid and you don't
8 have insurance benefits, so you can't get
9 preventative medical care." Again, I bet
10 every single person has seen the path of
11 what would happen for lack of preventative
12 medical care as part of the work you do in
13 CASA.

14 We have got to make sure that every
15 child in America has safe constructive
16 educare. And we've got to educate people
17 on what that word means and why it's so
18 important.

19 Fifty percent of all learned human
20 response is learned in the first year of
21 life. The concept of reward and
22 punishment and conscience is developed
23 during those first three years. There are
24 too many parents that are not around, too
25 many parents that are ill-equipped. We

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1 have got to make sure that educare is as
2 much a reality for children as K through
3 12 when parents cannot provide the
4 education, the support, and the child
5 development know-how necessary to give the
6 children of America a foundation upon
7 which to build.

8 We have got to make sure that we do
9 everything we can to support the schools
10 of America. Schools are so often the
11 early warning sign of neglect and abuse.
12 But teachers are so overwhelmed today by
13 paperwork, by rules and regulations, by so
14 many pressures. We can make a difference.
15 If we start looking and telling people
16 that, "Look. Something is wrong. This
17 football player makes six-digit figures
18 and look at what we're paying
19 schoolteachers" --

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. RENO: But we've got to focus on
22 the afternoons and the evenings. Because
23 if we leave our children unsupervised in
24 those late afternoons and early evenings,
25 that is again where the abuse and neglect

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1 can multiply, where the delinquency begins
2 to develop. This is a chance, as the
3 Carnegie Foundation has pointed out, where
4 we can make a difference and where
5 volunteers can make a difference.
6 Volunteers who will come to school, get
7 the school to keep the doors open longer
8 so the kids can use that computer bank
9 with a volunteer supervising it; midnight
10 basketball games that kids can go to and
11 be a part of, artistic programs, other
12 programs that can give kids a chance to do
13 something constructive, that can give them
14 a future.

15 What we could do if we take the
16 energy of this room and start transposing
17 it to other Americans, saying, "Look what
18 you can do just by reaching out and
19 rolling up your sleeves and working with
20 children and for children." There are so
21 many different things that we can do. If
22 you don't like this, you can certainly do
23 this. It's just an exciting opportunity.

24 And we have got to do everything we
25 can to make sure that our children

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1 graduate with skills that can enable them
2 to earn living wages.

3 But we've got to set another culture
4 in America. I get fussed at about TV
5 violence. People say Congress shouldn't
6 legislate. Congress shouldn't have to
7 legislate. But there is now a clear
8 enough message that there is a link
9 between violence in our children and TV
10 violence that we have got to do something
11 about it. And if we all join together in
12 sending a message to the networks, to the
13 cable industry, to the video industry,
14 that these are mediums that can be used
15 for the greatest good for children
16 imaginable -- Think of what we could do
17 if we developed exciting, innovative,
18 bold, imaginative, positive programming
19 for our children on Saturday mornings and
20 the afternoons and in the evenings. We
21 could make a difference.

22 And we have got to say to this world
23 that enough children in America -- one is
24 one too many -- but too many children in
25 America are being killed by guns. We have

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1 got to stop America's love affair with
2 guns.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. RENO: Look at the statistics.
5 The Center for Disease Control considers
6 youth violence as one of the greatest
7 public health problems in America today.
8 In 1992, there were 17 per 100,000
9 homicides, deaths from homicides of young
10 white males; 37 per 100,000 for all young
11 males ages 15 to 24; 159 per 100,000 for
12 young black males -- a national tragedy
13 that we should not tolerate. But as
14 achingly horrible as those figures are,
15 the characteristics are even more
16 appalling.

17 The victim and the perpetrator knew
18 each other, in most cases. In most cases,
19 it was the same sex, same race. In most
20 cases, it started from an argument. It
21 was usually not felony related. It was
22 usually alcohol rather than drugs. And in
23 137 per 100,000 of the cases, a firearm
24 was involved.

25 We can do so much if we start through

1 conflict resolution programs in schools
2 and in afternoon programs, teaching our
3 youngsters how to resolve their conflicts
4 without knives and fists and guns.

5 America has for too long invested in
6 its future through technology, through
7 automation, through smokestacks, through
8 buildings. It's time that America started
9 investing in its future, in the future
10 that counts. In people. In children.

11 I think of my afternoons after school
12 and the evenings. My mother worked in the
13 home. She taught us how to play baseball
14 and to bake a cake and to appreciate
15 Beethoven's symphonies. She punished us.
16 She loved us with all her heart. And
17 there is no childcare in the world that
18 will ever be a substitute for what that
19 lady was in our life.

20 Somehow or another, we have got to
21 take America back to the point where it
22 puts her children first; in the family, in
23 the workplace, in everything we do. You,
24 of all people in America, are doing that.
25 And we now have to take this mighty

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1 network and carry it further into every
2 community throughout America.

3 God bless you all.

4 (Applause.)

5 (Concluded at 9:38 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF FLORIDA

2 COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH

3 I, JANET HAMILTON, RPR, certify that I was
4 authorized and did stenographically report the
5 foregoing excerpt; and that the transcript is a
6 true record of the excerpt.

7 I further certify that I am not a relative,
8 employee, attorney, or counsel of any of the
9 parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of
10 the parties' attorneys or counsel connected with
11 the action, nor am I financially interested in the
12 action.

13 Dated this 24th day of May, 1994.

14 JANET HAMILTON, RPR

15 Notary Public - State of Florida

16 Comm. #CC080983 Expires 2/4/95

17 STATE OF FLORIDA

18 COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH

19 The foregoing certificate was acknowledged
20 before me this 24th day of May, 1994, by
21 JANET HAMILTON, who is personally known to me.

22 CHARMAINE S. CHILDERS

23 Notary Public - State of Florida

24 Comm. #CC357820 Expires 4/3/98

25

ALDERSON REPORTING COMPANY, INC.

(202)289-2260 (800) FOR DEPO

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