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5 KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY  
6 THE HONORABLE JANET RENO  
7 UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL  
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10 PRESENTED AT THE MINNESOTA WOMEN LAWYERS  
11 1996 ANNUAL MEETING  
12

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14 MINNEAPOLIS HILTON AND TOWERS  
15 1001 MARQUETTE AVENUE SOUTH  
16 MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA  
17

18  
19 JUNE 6, 1996  
20 8:00 PM  
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23  
24 REPORTED BY KATHRYN M. MOHAWK  
25 COURT REPORTER  
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1 Thank you so much, Sara. And I thank  
2 everybody for such a warm, wonderful welcome in  
3 Minneapolis today.

4 Skip Humphrey, congratulations to you on  
5 the Leadership Award. But thank you so much for  
6 all that you've done to get me to Minnesota, to  
7 work with our offices together so that there is a  
8 true partnership with general attorneys across the  
9 country. You have been a valued, valued friend;  
10 and I appreciate your wisdom.

11 And David Lillehaug, thank you very, very  
12 much for the wonderful work you do as United  
13 States Attorney. I am so proud to work with you.

14 I am particularly honored to be here  
15 today with Judge Diana Murphy of the Eighth

16 Circuit, and I congratulate you on the award you  
17 receive tonight. You truly deserve it. It has  
18 been wonderful to watch you in action.

19 And I am very pleased that President  
20 Clinton has nominated Ann Montgomery. And I just  
21 want you to know that I'm working as hard as I can  
22 -- we're working as hard as we can in the Justice  
23 Department to get her confirmed.

24 I had been hearing, in the last visit  
25 that I had to Minneapolis, about Rosealie Walls.

3  
1 And I had the chance to meet her tonight. And she  
2 reminds me, as I met her, of Judge Dixie Chastain,  
3 a judge who went to law school early on and then  
4 could not get a job. She went to law school in  
5 the '30s. She could not get a job because she was  
6 a woman and so was a probation officer; but  
7 finally became a great, distinguished juvenile  
8 court judge. And it is the Rosealie Walls and the  
9 Dixie Chastains that have gotten me where I am.

10 And it is wonderful to be here.

11 Judges can tell you what it's like to face  
12 confirmation, but mine was very quick. It was  
13 within three and a half weeks, probably a record.  
14 And suddenly your whole life kept flashing before  
15 you, and you remember your high school teachers,  
16 your baby-sitters, your friends from law school.  
17 Vettors were calling your friends from law school  
18 to ask what you did risque in law school.

19 And there is a smallness about America  
20 because the sister of the friend who got the call  
21 is here tonight with the kind of cookies that her  
22 sister used to bake. So, Mariah, thank you for  
23 being here.

24 Thinking about tonight reminds me:  
25 Remember to reach out and touch other people.

4  
1 Remember to reach out and help others along the  
2 way. You're going to get a lot more people into  
3 leadership positions if you only reach back of  
4 you, to the side of you, and to the front of you  
5 and give advice and support. And I felt it more  
6 than I can ever tell you because some of these

7 three years have been hard times. And it was  
8 those calls in the middle of the night from  
9 lawyers that I had known, men and women, calls  
10 from my mentors and from people who had been my  
11 antagonists, who made all the difference.

12 Remember your family, too, because there  
13 was one person that told me I should never be a  
14 lawyer. That was my mother. She said ladies  
15 didn't become lawyers. She's the same one who  
16 built her house. I wish she could see it now.  
17 But it is interesting to note that no one, not my  
18 law firm, not anybody else, not my mother, said  
19 that I couldn't be attorney general 30 years  
20 later. So, we have come a long way.

21 As a child, I thought I loved the law;  
22 but I know I love the law now. And I love  
23 lawyers. I do not like greedy, indifferent  
24 lawyers. And I am so impressed with what the law  
25 done right does for so many different people. But

5  
1 we still, all of us as lawyers, face some  
2 extraordinary challenges. And I would like to  
3 discuss those with you tonight.

4 I'd like to discuss with you tonight how  
5 we make the law real for all Americans. Eighty  
6 percent of the poor and the working poor,  
7 according to the American Bar Association, lack  
8 access to our courts and to our lawyers. For too  
9 many people, for that reason, the law is worth  
10 little more than the paper it's written on. The  
11 Constitution assumes a hollowness.

12 Many lawyers reach out and deal with  
13 great issues and great concepts, but then they  
14 don't reach below the concepts to deal with the  
15 people and the really human issues, the human  
16 problems that countless thousands of Americans  
17 deal with. This becomes even more of a problem as  
18 the world becomes more complicated and regulations  
19 prescribing human conduct become more  
20 complicated.

21 And it is not just the poor and the  
22 working poor. So many people in middle-class  
23 America feel alienated from the law, don't know

24 who to go to, can't afford a lawyer to solve a  
25 problem -- a social security problem, an insurance  
6  
1 problem. I saw it during the aftermath of  
2 Hurricane Andrew as people struggled to avoid  
3 being bilked and tried to find lawyers who could  
4 help them but were turned away by the cost of it.

5 Now, there are so many people that tell  
6 me, "Well, that's not my problem. I'm not  
7 interested in legal services. I'm going to  
8 practice law, and I'm going to let somebody else  
9 worry about it." I think the time has come in  
10 this country for us all to realize that we're in  
11 this one, big problem together. Unless we make an  
12 investment in children, unless we make an  
13 investment in legal services so that all America  
14 is represented, so that all America feels it has  
15 access to opportunity and to the law, we're going  
16 to be in a lot worse shape.

17 If people are continually and  
18 unreasonably thwarted in their quest for justice,  
19 they will soon begin to lash out against the law  
20 we love and against the institutions that we hold  
21 dear. They will feel disenfranchised. They will  
22 drop out. They will turn to drugs. They will  
23 turn to crime. And they have.

24 If you don't care about crime and drugs  
25 and what we can do about it, those that lash out

7  
1 and drop out will not be part of the workforce we  
2 need to maintain this nation as a great nation.  
3 The medical and educational institutions of this  
4 land will be brought to their knees.

5 Lawyers have a special challenge, an  
6 extraordinary challenge, but an extraordinary  
7 opportunity. And so I would try to answer the  
8 question of how we can make the law real for all  
9 Americans including our children.

10 First of all, let us join together. And  
11 you are such a bold and innovative group, I would  
12 ask you to join with me in making the law more  
13 easily understood. Winston Churchill told us to  
14 use small, old words. You have no idea what it's

15 like to get briefed by the wonderful lawyers in  
16 the Department of Justice. I went to law school,  
17 so I can understand it. And they are great  
18 lawyers, and they are great briefings. But then I  
19 have to translate it for press availability or  
20 something else, and they come in with more of the  
21 gobbledygook. And I say, "Nobody is going to  
22 understand this. Nobody is going to appreciate  
23 the law. Put it in simple terms that people can  
24 understand. Put it in human terms as to how it  
25 impacts each individual involved."

8  
1 And as lawyers -- whether it be attorney  
2 general or a private practitioner with a small  
3 practice or a legal services lawyer -- explain to  
4 your clients exactly what is happening. I see the  
5 great trial lawyers in my office at home take  
6 little time to explain. And then I will see a  
7 not-so-great trial lawyer patiently explain  
8 everything to the victim. The victim was so much  
9 more effective, and the not-so-good trial lawyer  
10 did almost as well.

11 Explain the future application of the law  
12 so that people can use the law themselves in order  
13 to become more self-sufficient.

14 Secondly, I think we should look at the  
15 administrative structures we establish. I  
16 remember when I started practicing law back in  
17 1963, one of the hardest things I ever had to do  
18 was to charge a lady a fee for collecting child  
19 support that was due her. There was no doubt that  
20 the child support was due her. There was no doubt  
21 that she was entitled to it. And I was offended  
22 by having to charge her a fee. I was also  
23 offended by my inability to pay my rent, so I  
24 recanted. There was no system.

25 Now, in 1996, there is a system. It is  
9  
1 not a perfect system. It is a partnership between  
2 the federal and state governments with the initial  
3 responsibility for collection lying at the state  
4 level. We have come so far. We have made such a  
5 difference. But there is still a frustration.

6 In Miami I left my home telephone number  
7 listed. And the calls I would get on a Sunday  
8 night, "You haven't collected my child support  
9 yet, and my rent is due tomorrow. I'm going to  
10 get thrown out." We have got to respond to that  
11 fear, to that anger. And we've got to respond to  
12 that quest for justice. We've got to make child  
13 support and the collection of child support as  
14 important and as easy to do as the collection of  
15 taxes in this country.

16 Congress has passed the Child Support  
17 Enforcement Act, and we are engaged in  
18 prosecutions at the federal level that involve  
19 orders arising from two different states. We have  
20 tried to improve our referral system, tried to  
21 improve our investigative capacity; and we will  
22 continue to strive in that area.

23 But one of the great frustrations with  
24 child support is to have a perfectly good order  
25 here, and then have the absent parent move to  
10 another state. The people of this country do not  
1 understand Federalism when they are told, "I'm  
2 sorry, I cannot enforce that child support order  
3 until I institute a new action in this state." We  
4 as lawyers have got to work together to develop a  
5 system that insures full faith and credit for  
6 child support orders so that we can maintain the  
7 principles of Federalism while getting the orders  
8 enforced.  
9

10 The third suggestion I have is to develop  
11 a more comprehensive approach to the problems that  
12 we address. I am so impressed with what I have  
13 read and been told today about your efforts in the  
14 establishment of the Minnesota Children's Law  
15 Center. That is an example of what I talk about,  
16 of bringing social workers together with lawyers  
17 and others concerned with the interests of  
18 children to address the issues in a comprehensive  
19 way.

20 But I think one of the most classic  
21 examples that we have undertaken -- and we need to  
22 improve upon -- is the whole issue of domestic

23 violence. In 1978, as a prosecutor, I was called  
24 by our medical examiner in Dade County and was  
25 told, "Janet, I've got all these records over  
11

1 here; and nobody has come over to examine them and  
2 to look at them and to find out why people have  
3 been killed over the last 20 years." So we got  
4 some university interns. We sent them over. And  
5 we determined that, in the last 20 years prior to  
6 that time, 40 percent of the homicides in Dade  
7 County were related to domestic violence --  
8 husband and wife, separated spouse, boyfriend/  
9 girlfriend.

10 We set up an LEA grant and developed a  
11 Domestic Intervention Program. The police weren't  
12 interested. The courts spoofed at us and didn't  
13 think we were quite serious. They referred to it  
14 as "domestics." We've come a long way. There is  
15 now, in that county, Domestic Violence Courts.  
16 There is a Domestic Violence Center. We try to  
17 work with police in a more effective manner. And,  
18 most of all, women came to the bench of the Dade  
19 County Circuit and County Courts and made the  
20 difference. So by the time I left, there was no  
21 judge there who wasn't taking these cases  
22 seriously because of his colleagues who were  
23 women.

24 Congress has passed the Violence Against  
25 Women Act, which last year provided for each state  
12

1 a down payment on funding for Violence Against  
2 Women, an initiative of \$425,000 for each state.  
3 And this year we will distribute a total of \$130  
4 million to every state in this land to develop  
5 good centers, innovative responses from the police  
6 and from prosecutors, domestic violence courts,  
7 effective actions that can truly make a  
8 difference.

9 I named Bonnie Campbell, this week,  
10 director of the Violence Against Women office.  
11 And she has done a marvelous job of raising the  
12 issue cross the country, of providing training, of  
13 making a difference. And I'd like to make a

14 special note. Donna Shalala and I formed an  
15 advisory committee to advise them on service.  
16 They have done an incredible job. And Sheila  
17 Wellstone has been instrumental in her service on  
18 that committee and providing such wonderful  
19 insight. But there is more to do.

20 Unless we start focusing really clearly  
21 on violence in the home, we are never going to end  
22 violence in the streets of this nation or in the  
23 schools of this nation. Violence is a learned  
24 behavior. And the child who watches his father  
25 beat his mother comes to accept violence as a way

13  
1 of life. We have got to start in the home if we  
2 are to end this epidemic of violence in this  
3 nation.

4 There are great steps being taken. Law  
5 and medicine are coming together: When the ABA  
6 and AMA meet together, when Roberta Ramo and the  
7 president of the American Medical Association join  
8 together on our advisory committee, you know there  
9 is progress.

10 But in every community across this land,  
11 we should have a liaison between the law and  
12 medicine. We should understand that it's not just  
13 a criminal justice problem but a public health  
14 problem, that an emergency room doctor shouldn't  
15 just sew up the wound but should provide  
16 appropriate counseling if we are ever going to end  
17 this cycle.

18 Again, full faith and credit has got to  
19 be afforded every order. It is so frustrating to  
20 see an order entered in one state not recognized  
21 in another state that doesn't have the computer  
22 capacity to store the order in the first place.

23 We are meeting in Kentucky shortly to  
24 work with Kentucky and with the State Chief  
25 Justices Conference to develop a system that can

14  
1 insure the continuation of our principles of  
2 Federalism while, at the same time, giving full  
3 faith and credit to the orders of the states. We  
4 can do so much if we work together.

5 But one thing I would ask you -- and this  
6 is probably a very appropriate state to suggest it  
7 in. I looked at the map in David Lillehaug's  
8 office today of Minnesota. What an incredible  
9 state! I can't wait to canoe on some of those  
10 lakes. But you must think of the distances. When  
11 I go to Iowa, neighboring, and they tell me that  
12 their major crime problem is domestic violence;  
13 when they tell me that in small towns as well as  
14 large cities, you understand that we're going to  
15 have to use modern technology in developing  
16 systems of communication between the small towns  
17 and judges and social service workers and medical  
18 workers so that, through modern technology, we can  
19 communicate to those too distant for immediate  
20 access remedies that will help them deal with the  
21 problem of domestic violence.

22 The next issue that I want to address in  
23 connection with how we make the law real for all  
24 Americans is to address straight on and directly  
25 the issue of pro bono services. We have announced

15  
1 in the Department of Justice a pro bono policy  
2 that urges all our lawyers to contribute 50 hours,  
3 at least, as an aspirational goal, of pro bono  
4 services.

5 Yesterday I went to a training session  
6 for some of the young lawyers participating in the  
7 D.C. Bar. I can't tell you what it's like to walk  
8 into a room with young lawyers, who I personally  
9 know have been working long hours, and find them  
10 there with their first pro bono cases, excited,  
11 scared, but with stars in their eyes because they  
12 believe they are helping somebody. It is so  
13 exciting to see the law become real, in human  
14 terms, for these lawyers who have struggled with  
15 the abstract issues and have oftentimes not seen  
16 it in terms of the immediate impact on people.

17 But it is clear to me that if we are to  
18 develop the pro bono capacity that the legal  
19 profession of this nation has the capacity for,  
20 we've got to do it in a more organized way. These  
21 lawyers are scared about conflict issues. We've

22 got to identify these issues and make sure, before  
23 they go into this, that they don't have to worry  
24 about it by carefully addressing the problems and  
25 telling them who they can represent and who they

16  
1 can't. We've got to make sure that they are  
2 trained, minimally, in some of the key issues,  
3 whether it be landlord/tenant or domestic  
4 relations. We have got to organize it so it's  
5 immediately available. And then they want so much  
6 to help. We can truly, truly make a difference.

7 And we have got to, all of us as lawyers,  
8 make sure, in order to maintain the credibility of  
9 law in this nation, that legal services programs  
10 and public defender programs maintain or enhance  
11 their strength.

12 Cheryl Little is a legal services lawyer  
13 in Miami. She has been an advocate for Haitian  
14 children and Haitian immigrants. For some in the  
15 Department of Justice, she has been a thorn in  
16 their side. For me, she has been an angel because  
17 she is an advocate who can remind us all of the  
18 rights of the most downtrodden.

19 And for as long as I live, I will always  
20 remember the instance in which the governor of  
21 Florida asked me to go to another part of Florida  
22 to reinvestigate the case of James Joseph  
23 Richardson, a man who had been prosecuted,  
24 convicted, and sentenced to death for the  
25 poisoning death of his seven children in 1968. He

17  
1 had not gone to the electric chair because of the  
2 Supreme Court's decision in 1972; but he had  
3 served 21 years in prison without any discipline  
4 on his record.

5 We reinvestigated the case and determined  
6 that the evidence was insufficient to charge him  
7 originally; that, although we could not tell what  
8 happened with the passage of time, the death and  
9 incapacity of witnesses, that he was probably  
10 innocent. And we told the court that he should go  
11 free. For as long as I live, I will always  
12 remember looking back over my shoulder as I left

13 that courthouse and watched him walk out a free  
14 man for the first time.

15 All of us as lawyers have a  
16 responsibility for insuring a comprehensive public  
17 defender system in this country; and if we don't  
18 have that, insuring that we step in where there is  
19 a breach.

20 The sixth point I want to make to you is  
21 controversial. And I want to tell you that the  
22 president of a large State Bar Association wrote  
23 me and said, "Well, it's nice to hear you all  
24 concerned about access; but you're not concerned  
25 about the unauthorized practice of law." And I

18  
1 called him. And I said, "Well, I'm certainly  
2 concerned about the unauthorized practice of law."  
3 And he said, "You just want these people in there  
4 who are going to compete with us." And I said,  
5 "You don't have to worry about them competing. I  
6 don't think any lawyer in your Bar Association is  
7 probably that interested in some of the areas that  
8 I'm talking about."

9 And what I'm talking about is walking  
10 into a public housing project and finding a lady  
11 there with Medicaid problems, with landlord/tenant  
12 problems with HUD, with welfare problems -- what  
13 you can and can't do -- and none of the lawyers  
14 around the table could give her any advice because  
15 they hadn't learned anything about it in law  
16 school. And it occurred to me that we should  
17 offer a four-year degree in community colleges and  
18 four-year colleges on Community Activism. You  
19 could define it for the area in which you served.  
20 For an inner city area, you went to an inner city  
21 school, you graduate with a degree that enables  
22 you to understand landlord/tenant issues, how do  
23 you clear the vacant lot? how do you get rid of  
24 the potholes? how do you get rid of the abandoned  
25 automobile? what do you do with the kid in trouble

19  
1 with police? and guardianship for the grandchild  
2 when your daughter is a crack addict.

3 I don't know many lawyers who are in

4 competition for any money or are going to get any  
5 money from that type of case. And I know that  
6 there are an awful lot of lawyers that would love  
7 it if there was somebody who was educated with a  
8 four-year degree and knew exactly what to do in  
9 these types of cases. On Indian reservations, it  
10 might be different. But it would be a four-year  
11 degree that emphasized problem solving, conflict  
12 resolution, and community organization, and how  
13 you empower people. It would be a hands-on  
14 internship. Who is the mayor? How do the police  
15 relate to the schools? How can they all work  
16 together? We can do so much if we are creative.

17 One of my mentors and one of my dear and  
18 great friends and one of the people responsible  
19 for my standing here tonight is Sandy D'Alemberte,  
20 now the president of FSU and formerly president of  
21 the American Bar Association. I espoused this  
22 thought to him one night; and I said, "I guess  
23 you're not going to like that because I'm going to  
24 be worried, again, about competition." And he  
25 said, "No. I remember the doctor telling me about

20  
1 the people in Ethiopia, that he went to Ethiopia  
2 and here was a man without a high-school education  
3 who had a real talent as a surgeon and who saved  
4 an eye; and the eye wouldn't have been saved if he  
5 had not been there."

6 We can do so much if we develop licensing  
7 procedures for these community advocates, if we  
8 work with colleges and universities who have a  
9 direct relationship to the community they serve.

10 We can make a difference.

11 That leads to the concept of community.  
12 And lawyers have a special responsibility to  
13 create community, to solve problems, to listen to  
14 people. For too many people in America, community  
15 has fallen away. I was out today at a community  
16 in the Phillips neighborhood at Chicago and  
17 Franklin where people were beginning to put  
18 community back together again. It can be done if  
19 lawyers and business people and school teachers  
20 and police officers work together. And, most of

21 all, if they work together putting the citizens of  
22 that community first. If they work together  
23 listening to them, understanding their problems,  
24 and reaching out to solve their problems. We can  
25 do so much if we develop that partnership.

21  
1 And I would urge you to consider tonight  
2 the concept of community justice; taking these  
3 scenes we have seen here in Minneapolis and then  
4 around the country where communities are beginning  
5 to come together, and suggesting to the courts, as  
6 we have suggested to the State Conference of Chief  
7 Justices, that we form a community court system  
8 and a community justice system.

9 Yesterday we met with the Chief Justice  
10 of the Executive Committee, Chief Justice Moyer of  
11 Ohio, who has taken the suggestion just with a  
12 wonderful spirit. And we are looking forward to  
13 identifying some communities where we can work  
14 together in identifying the key players, all of  
15 whom would be cooperative. And I envision  
16 community relief officers working with community  
17 probation officers working with community  
18 prosecutors and the judge assigned to a  
19 neighborhood with a high incidence of delinquency,  
20 domestic violence, and other community-type  
21 problems; a judge trained in what was available in  
22 the community, and a judge who had, from the city,  
23 an advocate assigned to become a promoter of  
24 services needed to resolve the problems.

25 I think we can do so much if we start to  
22  
1 rebuild the fabric of community around our family  
2 and children at risk. And we must. But if we are  
3 to represent anybody, we must figure out ways to  
4 represent our children, to make sure that our  
5 children's problems are solved by insuring that  
6 they have proper medical care as they come into  
7 this world, to make sure that our children's  
8 problems are resolved when their parents don't  
9 care, and that we insure steps be taken to provide  
10 them educare and safe, constructive child care;  
11 that we provide programs for them afternoons and

12 in the evening; that we figure out how to make our  
13 children's voices heard in this land. We have  
14 come a long way, but we have far to go.

15 But as we do so much for others, we  
16 cannot forget to reach out to those we love the  
17 most, to our spouses, to our children, to our  
18 frail and elderly parents. I remember my  
19 afternoons after school and in the evening and  
20 during the summertime. My mother worked in the  
21 home when she was wasn't building the house. She  
22 taught us to play baseball. She taught us to bake  
23 cakes. She taught us to appreciate symphony. She  
24 taught us not to like Dickens, but to applaud his  
25 forewords. She taught us to play fair. She

23  
1 punished us, and she loved us with all her heart.  
2 And there is no child care in the world that will  
3 ever be a substitute for what that lady was in our  
4 life.

5 And I remember in her later days, as she  
6 was dying, I took her across Canada in a train; I  
7 took her to the Caribbean on a cruise; I took her  
8 up the St. Thomas River in a houseboat; in a  
9 recreational van through the Blue Ridge; and to  
10 Washington to see the dinosaurs. And she lived a  
11 happy life until she died. And of all the things  
12 that I've done, I think probably doing that was  
13 the most rewarding and the most important.

14 As we strive to do all that we must for  
15 our community and for this nation that we love,  
16 let us never forget those who are closest. And  
17 let us structure our offices and our law firms and  
18 our nation so that we put children and family  
19 first while still achieving the goals that we hold  
20 so dear.

21 (Whereupon, the speech was  
22 concluded at 8:30 p.m.)  
23  
24  
25  
24

1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

2 ) ss

3 COUNTY OF ANOKA)

4 I, KATHRYN M. MOHAWK, Court Reporter and  
5 Notary Public duly qualified in and for the State  
6 of Minnesota, do hereby certify the foregoing  
7 transcript of the speech of THE HONORABLE JANET  
8 RENO, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL, is a true  
9 and correct transcript of my original stenographic  
10 notes to the best of my ability and understanding.

11  
12 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
13 my hand and affixed my notarial seal this \_\_\_\_ day  
14 of June, 1996.

15  
16 \_\_\_\_\_  
17 KATHRYN M. MOHAWK  
18 Notary Public

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