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JANET RENO
SEPTEMBER 5, 1996
1:28 P.M.
DOUBLETREE HOTEL
SYMFANY BALLROOM
BROAD AND LOCUST STREETS
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

MS. RENO: Thank you, Mr. Mayor. I just have appreciated the opportunity to work with you and I thank you. And it's great to be here with the local District Attorney. I have a real strong feeling about local DAs and it's wonderful to see Michael and them working together because that's what it's all about. You talk about partnership in the title of this conference, and that's what we should be about in America, bringing people together to address the issue of violence in a common sense way that has nothing to do with being Republican or Democrat, between being a federal

16 prosecutor or a local prosecutor, but it is
17 bringing everybody together in the community to
18 address the problem as partners. It's saying
19 police can't solve the problem by themselves but
20 police and teachers and businessmen and parks and
21 recreation specialists and citizens who care can
22 make a difference.

23 One of the points that was made to me as
24 I have traveled around the nation, however, is I
25 think we can make a difference but I'm not sure.

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1 Sometimes it gets so frustrating when we go two
2 steps forward and one step back and we don't know
3 whether we're getting anywhere. I'm here to tell
4 you I think we are getting places and reducing
5 violence in this country. Violence is down in most
6 major cities. Youth violence, which has been
7 escalating over these last ten years, is down for
8 the first time. It may be a blip but if we fight
9 hard it will not be a blip on the screen. We can
10 make our communities safer for our children. I
11 feel like I'm preaching to the choir.

12 You are my heroes and heroines. I've
13 looked at the conference scheduling and the
14 conference program and you're involved in so many
15 critical issues. Don't give up, fight harder and
16 we can all make a difference, if we approach it in
17 just a common sense way. Let's look at it.

18 The Mayor mentioned punishment. And
19 punishment is important in prevention. What I find
20 as I've traveled to many communities is that people
21 feel afraid, they don't feel safe in walking out of
22 their door thus they won't come down to the
23 community center, they don't want to reach out and
24 work with others, they stay behind their door. But
25 if we develop an antiviolence initiative that takes

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1 out that drug gang that has terrorized the
2 neighborhood, it is so exciting to come back in a
3 year or two and have people describe how people
4 have suddenly started coming out, joining together
5 and working to make a difference in terms of
6 preventing crime. So what we have tried to do is

7 work with the FBI, DEA and State and local
8 prosecutors and the police to focus on the truly
9 dangerous offenders, the violent drug gangs, the
10 violent traffickers and take effective action
11 against them.

12 Now, there are some people that are going
13 to be going to jail. That's not going to help if
14 that person is coming back to the community
15 particularly sooner rather than later. I was so
16 impressed to see in the conference program focus on
17 transition back to the community. If we are going
18 to prevent crime in this country, if we're going to
19 prevent violence, one of the first big steps that
20 we can take is to make sure that all offenders
21 returning to the community have job training, have
22 opportunities at job placement, have some support
23 symptoms that can help them get off on the right
24 foot. It makes no difference to send a man back to
25 the community to the apartment of the open air drug

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1 market where he got into trouble in the first place
2 without having a support system that can keep him
3 on the straight and narrow. You don't think he's
4 going to succeed if he goes back without a job and
5 without a skill that can enable him to earn a
6 living wage. These are the things that we've got
7 to focus on in making a common sense approach to
8 how we stop crime.

9 But we've got to be careful about how we
10 do it. We can teach them a job but if we don't
11 teach them to get to work on time or how to
12 interview or how to go out and apply for a job or
13 how to save money, it's not going to work. For the
14 woman who has just been incarcerated as a second or
15 a third time offender because she's been using
16 drugs or selling small amounts, and she has her
17 baby in prison, it's not going to make any sense to
18 send her back to the community. But if you do what
19 has been done in the State of New York and develop
20 an infant nursery in the prison and if you develop
21 child development programs that teach that person
22 how to be a good parent for the first time in her
23 life, she is going to have a far greater chance of

24 success on the outside. This is what violence
25 prevention is all about. And it is so exciting to

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1 walk into one of those nurseries. I often say you
2 can walk into a place and they can paint it up and
3 fix it up but you can't change the expression on
4 the face of those that are involved, either the
5 staff or the clients, and when you walk in and see
6 the babies, see the parents, see the staff, you
7 know they have created a partnership that is making
8 a difference. When the lady tells you I lost a kid
9 on the outside, I don't know where she is, they
10 took her away from me, but I'm never going to lose
11 this child because I finally know how to raise a
12 child, you realize what common sense steps you are
13 taking to prevent violence and to prevent the cycle
14 of crime.

15 Where does violence come from? I think
16 it comes first from the home. The child who
17 watches his father beat his mother comes to accept
18 violence as a way of life. For too long in this
19 nation, police, prosecutors and others just said
20 that's a domestic, and they didn't really
21 intervene, they didn't take the case to court, they
22 didn't pursue it. People like Lynn Abraham and
23 others are taking the lead in trying to focus on
24 the issue of family and domestic violence.

25 When I became a prosecutor in Miami in

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1 1978 I went to the medical examiner and had the
2 poly clinic do a study of who had been killed in
3 Dade County in the 20 previous years. Forty (40)
4 percent of the cases were related to domestic
5 violence husband-wife, boyfriend-girlfriend,
6 ex-spouse. We developed a domestic intervention
7 program. It is wonderful to go back to Dade County
8 now and find a domestic violence center in
9 operation, find judges trained in domestic violence
10 focusing on the issue. It is wonderful to go to a
11 meeting and find that the president of the American
12 Medical Association together with the president of
13 the AVA focusing on domestic violence. Unless we
14 focus on it and end violence in the home, we are

15 never going to end it on the streets or in the
16 schools of this nation.

17 Congress, in a bipartisan effort, made
18 this great step forward with the passage of the
19 Violence Against Women Act in 1994 that provides
20 stop monies as grants to states. But we require
21 that the states plan carefully with the communities
22 in making sure that these monies are used right.
23 Make sure that you work with your state agency
24 distributing these monies if you're involved or
25 feel the need for a domestic violence program in

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1 your community or the enhancement of a battered
2 spouse shelter. But this is such critical work.
3 And if you can develop programs where the
4 prosecutors are trained, the judges understand the
5 importance of it and there are aftercare programs
6 that can make a difference, we can reduce this
7 violence. We have also been interested in what can
8 be done through community policing. And through
9 the Cops program we have made grants available to
10 police departments across the country to be used
11 for specialized community policing work in domestic
12 violence.

13 I think this is so important because in
14 Miami we had formed a group composed of a community
15 police officer, a social worker and a public health
16 nurse. We sited them in a public housing project
17 that had significant crime. The crime began to
18 disappear but what didn't disappear were the calls
19 for service for family violence. A mother who
20 didn't know how to handle a 16-year-old who was
21 threatening her, family violence in its traditional
22 form. We can, if we work together and focus on it,
23 make the intervention that can make a difference.

24 The second place, I think, that violence
25 comes from in its immediate cause is drugs and

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1 alcohol. I think we focus so much on drugs but as
2 we do, we cannot and must not forget alcohol. The
3 Center for Disease Control shows that many of the
4 youth homicides that we have seen in these last ten
5 years are more often alcohol related than drug

6 related. And as we design programs, both treatment
7 and intervention and prevention programs, we must
8 focus on all these substances and how they affect
9 our children.

10 I used to get frustrated when I saw on an
11 offender charged with possession of a small amount
12 of drugs get probation, the probation officer had a
13 caseload of 100 at any one time, didn't know too
14 much about drug treatment and nothing really
15 happened. We designed the drug court that operates
16 on a care and sticker approach and says, look, you
17 can get prosecuted and you can get punished and you
18 can get really sent to prison if you're a second or
19 third time offender or you can work with us in
20 treatment. We'll work with you in job training and
21 placement, we'll get you off on the right foot. We
22 had a judge who was interested in the area who
23 focused on it, who supervised, who worked with us.
24 And it has had an impact based on some significant
25 evaluations. But we've got to increase and enhance

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1 that effort. The crime bill authorized it, we've
2 got to make sure that those dollars continue to
3 come into communities where they can make a
4 difference and where they can help.

5 One area that I would suggest, that you
6 put the pieces of the community together and
7 reweave the fabric of community around children and
8 families at risk is to focus on the scourge of
9 methamphetamine. We have moved quickly to develop
10 with DEA and with local police across the country a
11 strategy aimed at this drug that it's violence
12 inciting and it's as dangerous as crack. Let us
13 get to it before it gets established in so many
14 communities across this nation. And if you have
15 any questions about it, I urge you to contact your
16 local police. If they have any questions urge them
17 to contact the Drug Enforcement Administration
18 nearest you so that we can join together to prevent
19 this to where it does not take root.

20 Finally, another point of violence comes
21 from something that breaks my heart. Our elderly
22 are living longer, they are more frail, they are

23 more dependent and yet they are oftentimes either
24 left by themselves or cared for by a child who is
25 trying to make ends meets. The problem of elderly

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1 violence and violence against the elderly will
2 become a greater problem in this nation unless we
3 act now with experts to do whatever is necessary in
4 terms of preventing it. And I am convinced that we
5 can if we develop programs for the elderly. If we
6 give them the motivation to become more involved in
7 their community. If we say to them, yes, you can
8 make a difference. Even if you're 80 years old,
9 you can contribute.

10 And my favorite story of that is I went
11 to a community meeting in Miami once and an old man
12 raised his hand and said do you know how old I am
13 and what I do three mornings a week. And I said
14 no, sir. He said, I'm 84 years old and I volunteer
15 as a teacher's aid three days a week for three
16 hours each morning. And the young woman who was
17 seated next to him stood up and she said, I'm a
18 first grade teacher for whom he volunteers. And
19 the kids with learning disabilities can't wait for
20 their time with him because he has the patience of
21 Job and with my huge classroom I can't spend the
22 time with them that they need. And the kids who
23 are bright and eager and the best students can't
24 wait for their time with him because he challenges
25 them far beyond what I have time to challenge them

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1 to do. Every one of us can make a difference if we
2 address the issue of transportation, if we address
3 the issue of support that can make our elderly able
4 to contribute for a long, long time.

5 Another area that violence comes from is
6 guns. And the proliferation of guns, particularly
7 the proliferation of guns that came from the crack
8 gangs and the violence associated with crack.
9 There are a number of programs working across the
10 nation to get guns out off the hands of kids, the
11 traffickers and gangs. Again, I would add as part
12 of the building block, if you look at how you
13 develop a comprehensive effort in your community,

14 what you can do with the alcohol --- Bureau of
15 Alcohol and Tobacco and Firearms, the U.S.
16 Attorneys, the local district attorneys, what can
17 you do in terms of gun prevention programs that
18 work?

19 Another place that violence comes from
20 immediately, as an immediate cause, is that
21 juvenile justice system that in too many places in
22 this country is overwhelmed, overcrowded and
23 absolutely done in in terms of trying to address
24 the issue. When you look at the caseloads in the
25 juvenile court in so many places in this nation,

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1 when you look at the facilities that permit --- are
2 so crowded that they permit these children who have
3 behavior problems that require extensive
4 modification to be there a month or two and then go
5 back to the streets, you know it will never work.
6 All of us who are concerned about prevention have
7 got to continue to make a commitment to the
8 juvenile justice system that can truly serve our
9 children.

10 People talk about money, but you see the
11 12-year-old come into the system for the first
12 time. Non-violent first offender, nobody pays too
13 much attention to him because the system is
14 overwhelmed. He comes back the second time as a
15 13-year-old, he comes back as a 14-year-old. And
16 then people begin to think about it but by that
17 time he is so confirmed in his pattern of conduct
18 that it takes longer to undo it. If we had
19 sensible assessments up front, what they follow
20 through that enable that kid to get off on the
21 right foot early on, it could make a significant
22 difference.

23 But where does violence really come
24 from? Violence comes from the beginning. Violence
25 is a learned behavior. Violence is a product of

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1 too many communities that have fallen away from
2 their children. Violence is a product, too often,
3 of a nation that has forgotten and neglected its
4 children. As a prosecutor in Miami, I could pick

5 up a presentence investigation of a 17-year-old who
6 I had had adjudicated as an armed robber. I could
7 see three or four points along the way in that
8 child's life where we could have intervened and
9 made a difference and gotten him off into a strong
10 and positive future, but we failed because we would
11 wait until it was too late. We would wait for
12 expensive prisons and detention facilities rather
13 than pay a few dollars up front.

14 I tried to look with the school system at
15 causation factors. And the clearest causation
16 factors were dropouts and delinquency. And we
17 started a dropout prevention program with the
18 school system. But you can't wait until middle
19 school where all the dropout prevention programs
20 seem to start. By that time the child has already
21 fallen a grade level or two behind, they're
22 beginning to act out in other ways to attract
23 attention to themselves. We have to start
24 earlier.

25 And so we started a neighborhood

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1 intervention program focused around Headstart, but
2 that was 1985. And at that point the crack
3 epidemic hit in Miami. And the doctors took me to
4 our public hospitals to try to figure out what to
5 do about crack involved infants and their mothers.
6 And they taught me a very great deal. They taught
7 me that the first three years of life are the most
8 formative time in a person's life. Fifty (50)
9 percent of all learned human response is learned in
10 that first year of life. The child develops the
11 concept of a conscience and understands reward and
12 punishment. What good are all the prisons in the
13 world going to be 18 years from now if that child
14 doesn't understand what punishment means, if he
15 doesn't develop a conscience? What good are all
16 the great educational opportunities going to be 15
17 years from now if that child doesn't have the
18 foundation of learning solidly built in that first
19 year?

20 And so I came to the conclusion that if
21 we're really going to do something about violence

22 we have to take the building blocks of children's
23 lives and try to reinvigorate the family but
24 provide support outside of what the family can't or
25 doesn't do to make a difference. We have got to

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1 make sure that we have strong parents who know how
2 to raise children. And parenting skills courses
3 are a darn good way to start. We teach so many
4 things in our public schools but we don't teach
5 them what bonding and nurturing mean.

6 When I looked at that crack nursery, the
7 neonatal unit at our hospital, children have not
8 been held or talked to except when changed or fed
9 and you could begin to see them just not
10 responding. That is one of the critical points.
11 If we are ever to really change the culture of
12 violence in this country, we've got to make sure
13 that our children are properly supported. You look
14 at parents who are struggling to make ends meet
15 because child support isn't being paid. We should
16 make it as difficult in this country or as easy in
17 this country to collect child support as it is to
18 collect income tax.

19 And what does that have to do with
20 violence? I collected child support in Miami and I
21 get the calls from the frantic parent at seven
22 o'clock on the Sunday night saying what are you
23 doing about getting my rent, I'm about to be out on
24 the streets, I can't raise my children right. It
25 can make a difference.

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1 One of the moments I will always remember
2 is being with the President as we dedicated a new
3 church to replace a church that had been burned in
4 South Carolina. Suddenly, as I walked off the
5 dais, I heard a woman say, Janet, and I looked over
6 and I didn't know her. And she says, I'm from
7 Miami, I moved up here after Hurricane Andrew. You
8 always used to collect child support for me. She
9 said, I saw you and your mom in the Martin Luther
10 King parade. And she said, I almost rushed up and
11 hugged you and thanked you for the child support.
12 Can I still rush up and hug you? But the most

13 moving moment was when she turned and said, and
14 these are the children you got support for. And when you look
15 up at two young men who were towering above her,
16 then you really understand every piece makes a
17 difference.

18 We've got to make sure if our children
19 are going to live in a culture that does not
20 promote violence that they have a healthy life.
21 You look at the presentence investigations again,
22 problems, health problems that could have been
23 prevented. We've got to make sure that our
24 children and every child in America has preventive
25 medical care. Something is wrong with a nation

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1 that says to a 70-year-old person you can have an
2 operation that extends your life expectancy by a
3 few years regardless of whether you can pay for it,
4 but says to the child of a working poor person,
5 sorry, you can't get preventive medical care.

6 How do you say we do it? Again, if we
7 use common sense. There are doctors in your
8 community, that if we can work out liability issues
9 and the like, want to volunteer their time but
10 there may be transportation problems. Let's link
11 up some transportation systems with the doctors who
12 want to volunteer their time. But let us think
13 about what's possible. Instead of saying, no, we
14 can't afford it, no, we can't do this, let us look
15 at what we have in our community and bring them
16 together as partners to solve this problem. I find
17 that doctors are more than willing to try to do
18 everything they can to address this issue.

19 Let us, at the same time, recognize if
20 the first three years are so important then the
21 concept of educare is so important. I don't call
22 it child care, I call it educare, solid
23 professional child care that can teach children ---
24 that start to teach children the difference between
25 right and wrong those first three years blend in

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1 with the Headstart and prepare the child for our
2 public schools. That can, again, be done if we
3 look at how the pieces can work together. If we

4 involve the churches in our community and if we
5 extend our efforts in terms of training to develop
6 the best in educare possible, it can make a
7 difference.

8 One of the keys that seems to me in
9 violence prevention is supporting our schools in
10 every way that we can. I can remember the name of
11 every one of my teachers. They were profound
12 influences in my life. And, again, I'm struck with
13 the problem in the nation that pays its football
14 players in the six digit figures and pays the
15 school teachers what they pay them.

16 Most of the kids that I've seen in
17 trouble are not dumb kids, they're not stupid kids,
18 they're really probably very, very bright. They
19 sure can be creative and ingenious. And sometimes
20 they don't feel challenged because the teacher has
21 all the paperwork to do. She has a class of 30 or
22 35. She's got to teach them new skills that she's
23 probably just learning herself in terms of
24 commuters. We've got to give our schools the
25 resources to do the job to prepare our children for

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1 this next century. But then you're going to find
2 some kids out of school and the police are going to
3 see the daytime burglary rate go up. And the
4 teachers are going to have problems teaching. Let
5 us develop more effective community truancy
6 prevention programs. If you have trouble like I
7 have, police say it's just not worth doing because
8 we pick up the kid, take them back to school, the
9 school calls home, momma doesn't come get them and
10 the school sends the child home on the bus and he's
11 right back out the next day. Let us develop a team
12 of social worker or public health nursing and
13 community police officers that can take that child
14 home, find out what is happening and intervene in a
15 positive voluntary way before that person gets too
16 far down the line.

17 I am so impressed with what you're doing
18 here on the conference program with discussions of
19 conflict resolution and dispute resolution and the
20 fact that you're emphasizing the need to evaluate

21 what's working and what's not working. But I am
22 convinced that there is a new force spreading
23 across this country. Lawyers are learning how to
24 negotiate better, teachers are learning how to
25 negotiate better, mediate children's problems. We

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1 can do so much. If we can send a man to the moon
2 we ought to be able to teach people and teach kids
3 how to negotiate their problems without knives and
4 guns and fists. If we can teach them how to spell,
5 if we can teach them how to use computers, we ought
6 to be able to teach them that. And I think what
7 you're doing in this program is just so important.

8 But if we have the best schools and we
9 teach everything and we keep the kids in school and
10 we resolve the conflicts, we still have problems
11 because so much kids are walking out of their
12 schoolhouse onto the streets without supervision
13 until later in the evening. And if we do nothing
14 but make sure our children have appropriate
15 supervision in those afternoon and evening hours
16 where they are now alone, on weekends where parents
17 may be working, if we can develop mentoring
18 programs and constructive and positive programs
19 with our parks and recreation specialists, we can
20 make a difference.

21 Now, people say, again, it's a matter of
22 money. But I have seen so many examples to date of
23 police officers who leave their three o'clock shift
24 and go directly to the soccer field where they are
25 sponsoring a soccer team. I have seen parks and

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1 recreation specialists develop special programs for
2 kids at risk. If we take our resources and use
3 them right we can make a difference. And we can
4 make a difference if we recognize what police
5 officers can do as community police officers.

6 It is wonderful to see an old police
7 officer, who I've known slightly, in the Miami
8 newspaper saying I'm used to arresting kids but I'm
9 really helping them now and I'm enjoying this a lot
10 more. It is wonderful to see two young men come to
11 Rochester, Massachusetts, to tell the president of

12 the United States what two community police
13 officers have done to get them off on the right
14 foot and serve as mentors to make a difference.
15 Community policing in a problem solving system
16 where they help the neighbors and the kids solve
17 the problems can make a difference. But we've got
18 to prepare our children for the world. We've got
19 to make sure they graduate with skills that can
20 enable them to earn a living wage. We've got to provide the
21 transition for them to the world of work, and we can do
22 that with the business community becoming a partner
23 with schools across this nation to provide adjunct
24 opportunities to learn what work is all about and
25 how to have the discipline necessary to do well in

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1 work.

2 Philadelphia is doing some wonderful
3 things. Wonderful things are being done around
4 this nation. But what people ask me regularly is,
5 what works. You have at your table, I think, a
6 book we put together of one city that seems to be
7 addressing the problem of youth violence. It
8 doesn't include everything that's probably a foot
9 in Boston, there are other communities. And what I
10 would like to challenge you to do is let's exchange
11 information about what's working. As you here at
12 the conference identify programs that are working,
13 let's let the Office of Juvenile Justice and
14 Delinquency Prevention know. We're trying to
15 develop mentors with others to insure dissemination
16 of information about truancy prevention and about
17 meriting programs, about conflict resolution
18 programs. But let's start sharing the information
19 about what's working. And then as we share, let us
20 never ever give up. You are making a difference.

21 Children can have a future and we can do
22 it if we use our common sense, use the resources in
23 the community, believe the best of people and put
24 the pieces together so that child by child, family
25 by family, school by school, block by block, we can

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1 take this nation back for our children and give
2 them a strong and healthy and positive future.

3 Thank you.

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SPEECH CONCLUDED AT 1:57 P.M.

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