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6 SPEECH GIVEN BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO
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15 Cleveland, Ohio
16 Monday, September 30, 1996
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18 Speech given by ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET
19 RENO taken at the Justice Center Auditorium,
20 1200 Ontario, Cleveland, Ohio, at 2:00 o'clock
21 p.m., on Monday, September 30, 1996, and the
22 proceedings being taken down by Stenotype by
23 LORRAINE J. KLODNICK, RMR-CRR, and transcribed
24 under her direction.
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1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: I can't tell
2 you how impressed I am and how much I respect
3 you all for bringing such a group together today
4 and for the willingness of those who are
5 volunteering or who are prospective volunteers
6 for your willingness to get involved. Let me
7 tell you why I think it's so important.

8 In 1978 I became the State Attorney for
9 Miami, Florida, for Dade County. The medical
10 examiner asked me to send some interns over to
11 try to figure out why people had been killed in
12 the county for the previous 20 years. We did a
13 study and 40 percent of the homicides in the
14 county over that period of time were related to

15 domestic violence, boyfriend/girlfriend,
16 husband/wife, ex-spouse. We developed an LEAA
17 grant and established a domestic intervention
18 program that is still ongoing.

19 Over those years, the 15 years that I
20 served as the State Attorney, getting people
21 interested in doing something about domestic
22 violence was like pulling teeth. Police
23 officers just write it off as domestic. Judges
24 way before Judge Adrine's time were far less
25 interested. Prosecutors trying to get them into

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1 domestic violence unit, I needed bulldozers.

2 But talking to the victims and looking
3 at the statistics made me realize how important
4 it was. We had a no drop rule that required
5 that they had to talk to me before we would
6 agree to drop the prosecution. And I never had
7 one ultimately disagree with me.

8 In talking with them the pain came
9 through and the frustration, the frustration
10 with the system, the system that revictimized
11 them as they went through the system, the system
12 that did not provide for appropriate sanctions
13 or for appropriate treatment. And I became ever
14 more committed to the whole effort to do
15 something about domestic violence.

16 As I sat there and looked at the cases
17 you feel frustrated as a prosecutor. I think
18 Stephanie would say the same thing, because you
19 know there's a lot of crime out there you can't
20 prevent, but you can prevent a murder, you can
21 prevent further assault if we interrupt the
22 cycle of violence and if we give people the
23 strength and the support and the caring
24 compassion that will enable them to come through
25 the system. So this initiative is just so

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1 extremely important.

2 Tomorrow is the beginning of National
3 Domestic Violence Awareness Month, but my mother

4 always told me that she didn't want to celebrate
5 Mother's Day because she thought every day was
6 Mother's Day. So I think every day should be
7 Domestic Violence Awareness Day and every month
8 the same.

9 What you have undertaken here in
10 Cleveland is so vitally important, to have
11 police working with prosecutors, working with
12 the courts in a comprehensive way, to have the
13 medical community involved is like a breath of
14 fresh air. But there are others that should be
15 involved.

16 Teachers all so often are the people
17 who first determine that there is domestic
18 violence and teachers do not know what to do.
19 The child is crying in the corner of the room.
20 What happened? She will hear the stories that
21 Ms. Alexandria talked about. She will hear it
22 and not know where to go or what to do. You've
23 got to develop an outreach to the public school
24 system.

25 Employers. This past week ironically

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1 an employee came to me, a victim of domestic
2 violence wanting to know what to do. Employee
3 assistance programs in major companies can be an
4 extraordinarily important partner in this
5 initiative.

6 General practitioners. Not just the
7 emergency room, but the general practitioners of
8 this community and the family practitioners have
9 got to be educated ever more to recognize that
10 domestic violence is not a criminal justice
11 problem; it is a public health problem.

12 And all of us have got to be sensitized
13 because I suspect that there is not a person in
14 this room who has not from a friend or family
15 member seen the scars or the -- both the
16 emotional and physical of domestic violence. It
17 is something that we cannot continue to
18 tolerate. If you can't convince people of that,
19 then just point out to them that the child that

20 watches his father beat his mother comes to
21 accept violence as a way of life.

22 Unless we end violence in the home we
23 are never going to end it on the streets or in
24 the schools of this nation. We have got to
25 interrupt the cycle where it starts. Violence

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1 is a learned behavior and one of the best
2 classrooms to date has been in the home.

3 So what you undertake in your
4 initiative here in Cleveland is just to be
5 commended by everybody across the country and
6 I'm going to go back and start spreading the
7 word about what you're doing here. My goal as
8 Attorney General is to be a partner with
9 communities across this nation, not to come in
10 to tell you how to do things or what to do, but
11 to ask how can we support you, how can we work
12 with you in developing a partnership against
13 domestic violence in this country.

14 In 1984, with a bipartisan effort on
15 the part of Congress resulted in a passage of
16 the Violence Against Women Act which provided
17 significant funding including violence
18 initiatives. We will continue this effort. It
19 goes through your state criminal justice agency
20 and is distributed across the state and you
21 should, if you have not already done so, get
22 yourself fully advised as to how that is
23 distributed. Any suggestions you have as to
24 what we can do in Washington to work with you
25 more effectively, we need to know that. The

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1 Violence Against Women Act also provided some
2 tools that are important for practitioners who
3 are involved in this effort.

4 I used to be frustrated when I would
5 see a victim of domestic violence come to
6 Florida. Violence would go back and forth one
7 to the other federal taking over local on who
8 had the jurisdiction. Provisions in the

9 Violence Against Women Act provide for
10 jurisdiction in certain cases. We don't want to
11 take the case from the local prosecutor. We
12 want to work with the local prosecutor to
13 determine what is in the best interest, who
14 should handle it, not who gets the credit, but
15 who could most effectively deal with a
16 particular crime concerning the differences in
17 jurisdiction.

18 There's also a provision that's
19 important that says if you're subject to a
20 protective order it is against the law, against
21 federal law to be in possession of a firearm.
22 Many states don't have that provision. They
23 handle it in other ways. But it is a tool that
24 can be very useful for local government if it is
25 needed.

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1 In all our governments we're trying to
2 do the best to develop that partnership, through
3 the COPS program. We're not only getting police
4 officers to the street to be designated
5 community police officers, we're developing
6 special initiatives that involved domestic
7 violence recognizing, again, that when a police
8 officer goes into a community with a high crime
9 rate and becomes part of that community, a very
10 interesting phenomena happens. First of all
11 people don't want to come out from behind their
12 doors. They're frightened.

13 The community police officer gets in
14 there, works with other detectives, the
15 community becomes safer. People start coming
16 out from behind their doors. They come down to
17 the community center. They become involved.
18 They talk about quality of life. They want that
19 graffiti down. They become a voice at city
20 hall. But also the domestic violence pours into
21 the streets and police officers say that after
22 they've turned so many other issues around
23 domestic violence is often the most difficult
24 issue of all to deal with.

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Those who propose to volunteer, may I

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1 say you're a little lower than the angels. To
2 have a busy law practice and to still be willing
3 to do this is to me the example that should be
4 set for all lawyers across this land. When I
5 came to the Department of Justice people said,
6 but I'm a lawyer. I work for the Federal
7 Government. I'm engaged in public service.

8 Every one of us can do a little bit
9 more. I volunteer in the Community Dispute
10 Resolution Program in Washington in a public
11 school. All of us can make a difference by
12 reaching out beyond our particular job to truly
13 make a difference. I detected at first a
14 reluctance because people said I may have a
15 conflict, how can I be involved. I may be
16 interviewing somebody who is being prosecuted by
17 the US Attorney's office.

18 We have found that working together we
19 can resolve any issue of conflict. We can
20 provide for appropriate protections and we can
21 provide for appropriate training. And I am so
22 gratified to hear what you're doing here in
23 terms of the training and supervision that you
24 are providing. It is so critically important.

25 I think one of America's greatest

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1 problems is that people lack access to justice.
2 The American Bar Association estimates that as
3 many as 70 to 80 percent of the poor and working
4 poor in this country do not have access to a
5 lawyer. That means that for too many the law is
6 worth a little more than the paper its written
7 on. By your willingness to become involved, to
8 make sure that there are advocates for those who
9 are victims of domestic violence, you are
10 showing so many others that each one of us can
11 make a difference beyond the narrow confines of
12 our job. I applaud you and let's go. We can
13 make a difference. You surely will.

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CERTIFICATE

I, LORRAINE J. KLODNICK, do hereby certify that as such Reporter I took down in Stenotypy all of the proceedings had in the foregoing transcript; that I have transcribed my said Stenotype notes into typewritten form as appears in the foregoing transcript; that said transcript is the complete form of the proceedings had in said cause and constitutes a true and correct transcript therein.

Lorraine J. Klodnick, Notary Public
within and for the State of Ohio

My commission expires June 28, 1997.

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