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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 City Club, 850 Euclid Avenue,  
20 Cleveland, Ohio, at 12:30 o'clock p.m., on  
21 Monday, September 30, 1996, and the proceedings  
22 being taken down by Stenotype by LORRAINE J.  
23 KLODNICK, RMR-CRR, and transcribed under her  
24 direction.  
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1 ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you,  
2 Cleveland, for having me here today to tell you  
3 what a wonderful city you have. I think this is  
4 my fourth time here in three and a half years as  
5 Attorney General. I had a chance to see the  
6 waterfront, to see the flats, to see the new  
7 stadium. It is an exciting city and it reminds  
8 me of the city I come from 1,500 miles away, a  
9 city I love, a city that has a sense of  
10 community in many diverse ways and the city that  
11 I think is an example to me and a reminder to me  
12 of how important community efforts are.

13 Let's look a little bit at history. I  
14 think so much of our world focused on our

15 communities up until the depression and with the  
16 depression we began to look to Washington to  
17 solve our problems. World War II followed and  
18 we looked with ever increasing regularity to  
19 Washington to solve our problems. We looked to  
20 Washington in the 50's and the 60's to ensure  
21 civil rights for all Americans. In the 70's we  
22 looked to Washington for money. In the 80's  
23 Washington began to shift programs to the  
24 states, but without the dollars and the states  
25 shifted programs to communities without the

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1 dollars.

2 And then judging from my experience and  
3 from what I have heard of your work in  
4 Cleveland, communities with their backs up  
5 against the wall became bold and innovative and  
6 creative. Doctors reached out to work with  
7 lawyers, public servants reached out to the  
8 private sector and people joined together to see  
9 how they could rebuild the fabric of community  
10 in cities and towns across this nation.

11 As a consequence, it has been a  
12 wonderful experience for me in these three and a  
13 half years to see cities like Cleveland, to see  
14 smaller communities, or even just a neighborhood  
15 as it has galvanized itself into action, as it  
16 has harnessed the energy and the dynamic  
17 qualities of its citizens to make a difference  
18 in crime and the economy and the condition of  
19 the people of that neighborhood. It has done so  
20 with volunteers, it has done so with dedicated  
21 public servants, it has done so with enlightened  
22 businessmen and women who understand the need to  
23 invest in community.

24 What is the Justice Department's role  
25 in this? I never liked the Feds coming to town

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1 telling us what to do. I always wished they  
2 would come to town and say how can we work with  
3 you, how can we build a partnership. That is

4 what I have been dedicated to doing in these  
5 three and a half years, figuring out how I can  
6 work with local communities who understand their  
7 needs and resources better than we do, how we  
8 can provide what dollars we have, what expertise  
9 we may have, what resources we may have in a way  
10 that complements the local community.

11 In so doing, I have had a chance to  
12 work more closely with many communities that are  
13 very successful and I see emerging a pattern.  
14 And I'd like to talk to you a little bit about  
15 what I see as the end result of this pattern.  
16 Community justice.

17 Your chief justice, Chief Justice  
18 Moyer, has been chairman of the state chief  
19 justice's conference and it's been my privilege  
20 to work with him in this past year. And we have  
21 focused on what we might do together, the  
22 conference and the Department of Justice,  
23 working with courts throughout the land to  
24 create a concept of community justice with  
25 community courts.

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1 Let me tell you how I came to think in  
2 those concepts. Everyone has in these last  
3 three or four years heard about community  
4 policing. There are more community police in  
5 this country today on the streets working with  
6 citizens and it seems to be working, but it is  
7 working because it puts people first. The  
8 community police officer knows the residents of  
9 his or her neighborhood. They know the  
10 problems. They understand the priorities. They  
11 involve the citizens and enforcement and in  
12 telling the police what should be done and what  
13 shouldn't be done in terms of the resources and  
14 the priorities of that community.

15 It is fascinating to look out in a  
16 community policing neighborhood and see  
17 community police officers who reached out to  
18 young people, not to create conflict or to  
19 create antagonism, but to build a sense of trust

20 and a sense of respect. It is a wonderful  
21 experience to stand in the great hall of the  
22 Department of Justice and have two young men who  
23 were on their way to a real life of delinquency  
24 stand up and say, Mr. President, these two guys,  
25 pointing to two community police officers, are

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1 what have kept me out of trouble and gotten me  
2 off to a fresh start.

3 It is wonderful to hear a  
4 representative of the state police in Michigan  
5 describe how when I first came to Detroit he  
6 said, Ms. Reno, you couldn't have gone into that  
7 neighborhood and we wouldn't take you, but now  
8 police have worked with the citizens and the  
9 citizens are now unafraid and they will come out  
10 from behind their doors. They will come to the  
11 community center. They will work with us. Now  
12 what they're interested in is doing something  
13 about the graffiti, doing something about the  
14 overgrown lots, doing something that makes a  
15 difference for the community as a whole.

16 It is a wonderful experience to watch a  
17 community police officer work with parks and  
18 recreation specialists, work with the school  
19 teacher in identifying the truant and taking  
20 steps to get that kid back into school, not just  
21 for that day, but on a continuing basis.

22 It is community at its best when it  
23 works right and at the heart of it are the  
24 people. Not people who are just a number on a  
25 case report, not just people who are a number in

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1 a court as a victim, but people who are involved  
2 in the basic sense of the democracy in working  
3 with the authority of government to address the  
4 real problems.

5 And so it didn't surprise me to go to  
6 Boston to an area that had faced high crime and  
7 find that they carried the concept a step  
8 further. Community police officers were working

9 with community probation officers to identify  
10 those coming back on probation or those  
11 youngsters who were on probation and riding  
12 together to make home visits, to make sure these  
13 probationers were abiding by the conditions of  
14 their probation, but more than that, giving them  
15 a pat on the back and giving them support and  
16 giving them encouragement.

17 As a consequence, the figures in Boston  
18 show that there was a lot greater compliance  
19 with the terms and conditions of probation and a  
20 reduction in recidivism amongst these  
21 probationers. But the police officers and the  
22 probation officers, now that they were focused  
23 on a person, not just a number, not just a case,  
24 were also looking at that person as a whole  
25 person. What does that youngster need? That

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1 youngster needs to know what it's like to get a  
2 job and how to get a job. How to interview.  
3 How to get to work on time. How to take  
4 directions. How to learn on the work site so  
5 that they can have other opportunities.

6 And the police and the probation  
7 officers reached out to the private sector, to  
8 the John Hancock Insurance Company and to  
9 others, and developed not just a program for how  
10 you get work and how you keep work, but a  
11 program that then gave them a work opportunity  
12 to put their learning to practice.

13 When you see the concept of community  
14 police officers, community probation officers  
15 working with the private sector in these  
16 efforts, you begin to understand the tremendous  
17 potential behind the community. But then to  
18 turn around and to see churches involved in this  
19 effort, to see ministers and their wives and  
20 their parishioners working with young people,  
21 working with the elderly, working together with  
22 police officers in a setting where people came  
23 first, you understand what community can mean.

24 So then it's not surprising that

25 prosecutors are starting to look at community

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1 prosecution. I had an office of 230 lawyers.  
2 My jurisdiction was 50 miles in length. It was  
3 a huge jurisdiction and my first reaction was we  
4 can't have community prosecutors, we don't have  
5 enough resources. But I watch people around the  
6 country experimenting with community  
7 prosecution. If you put a prosecutor in a  
8 community so that he or she understands what's  
9 important in that community, that that case of  
10 graffiti is not just a minor case, but it goes  
11 to the quality of life and the circumstances of  
12 that community. It can make such an incredible  
13 difference. And so the prosecutor in Portland,  
14 Oregon, is developing this concept as are others  
15 and it is making a difference.

16 So we look forward to working with the  
17 Chief Justice's conference, working with courts  
18 across the land to see what we can do working  
19 together to develop the concept of community  
20 courts.

21 Now, in so many communities the court  
22 is distant. It is downtown and removed from  
23 suburbs. It is downtown and two bus transfers  
24 across town from an area with a large crime  
25 problem. People say the judge doesn't

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1 understand what my problems are here. He  
2 doesn't understand the impact of crime on this  
3 community. How can I get him to hear about it?  
4 What we did at home was sometimes put the  
5 neighbors on the bus and take them up to the  
6 court, but it was a 40 mile bus trip. Better  
7 that we have community courts in situations  
8 where it is appropriate.

9 Midtown Manhattan, of all places, is a  
10 place that has established a community court  
11 that could be a model, but it does not have to  
12 be the only model for how we might generate  
13 community justice in neighborhood based

14 community courts. Let me just describe to you  
15 how we might go about it.

16 Identify a jurisdiction with the  
17 significant problem of the amount of domestic  
18 violence, significant delinquency, other quality  
19 of life issues, identify a jurisdiction large  
20 enough to create a case load that would be the  
21 equivalent of one judge's case load. I'm not  
22 talking about new dollars, though that helps.  
23 I'm talking about taking the resources we have  
24 and trying to blend them together in a way that  
25 puts people first.

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1 I think what upsets America, what  
2 frustrates America and what undermines the  
3 confidence of some of our citizens is that they  
4 feel they are so nameless, so faceless and if we  
5 give them an identity in our judicial system so  
6 that they can be heard when appropriate, I think  
7 it can make a difference. When citizens can  
8 feel that justice is done it makes such a  
9 difference.

10 In the crime crisis in Miami in the  
11 early 80's our office was overwhelmed.  
12 Volunteers came forward to help. Most of them  
13 were very supportive, but I noted one was a bit  
14 sceptical. At the end of the year I took them  
15 all out to lunch and the sceptical one said, I  
16 came because I believe that the justice system  
17 didn't work and the judges were too lenient and  
18 you all did things wrong, but she said your  
19 prosecutor let me sit in as I volunteered on  
20 every court hearing and every conference in the  
21 judge's chambers and of all the situations I saw  
22 in this past year I only disagreed with one.  
23 When people can become involved in the system,  
24 they can have confidence in the system.

25 One of the frustrations for any judge

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1 is to have a case load so large and so diverse  
2 throughout a jurisdiction that he or she cannot

3 follow the defendant and cannot know regularly  
4 what is happening to that defendant in terms of  
5 complying with the terms and conditions of  
6 probation or community service or restitution.

7 A community court appropriately  
8 structured would leave that person in the  
9 neighborhood so that the judge could understand  
10 from the community police officer and the  
11 community probation officer that there was  
12 compliance and when there wasn't compliance that  
13 matter could be set immediately upon the judge's  
14 calendar.

15 A judge can be a marvelous force in the  
16 community and can't you imagine with the judge  
17 identifying the needs and resources of the  
18 community that he or she serves what one court  
19 can do in terms of mobilizing residents,  
20 mobilizing social service deliverers, the  
21 teachers, the parks and recreations specialists,  
22 the activists in the neighborhood, the young  
23 people to make a difference.

24 One of the really critical parts of a  
25 community court would emphasize paying back to

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1 the community, paying back the victim, making  
2 people whole or as whole as they can be after  
3 they have been a victim of a crime. Victims too  
4 often feel they are the forgotten person in the  
5 criminal justice system. They can't afford to  
6 go downtown to be heard even though the judge  
7 would give them the opportunity to be heard.  
8 They can't afford to leave their job to go be  
9 heard, to let the judge and everyone know the  
10 impact of the crime or what was due in  
11 restitution.

12 If we developed a community setting,  
13 victims I think can then have their day in court  
14 and no longer be forgotten by the system. A  
15 community court would give the court the  
16 opportunity to look at the family as a whole.  
17 In one instance you may have truancy here, child  
18 abuse in the same family, drug abuse on the part

19 of the parent, domestic violence and delinquency  
20 on the part of a 17 year old brother. Too often  
21 these pieces are seen separate and apart by  
22 different people never looking at the whole,  
23 never looking at what we can do to restore that  
24 family to wholeness, never looking at what we  
25 can do together in a community, to reweave the

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1 fabric of community around these children and  
2 families at risk.

3 The court can take different forms. It  
4 can pursue different initiatives. In 1978 our  
5 medical examiner in Dade County asked me to come  
6 study why people had been killed in the county  
7 in the last 20 years. We did a study with  
8 University of Miami interns and determined that  
9 40 percent of the homicides in that county in  
10 the past 20 years were related to domestic  
11 violence: Husband and wife, boyfriend and  
12 girlfriend, ex-spouse.

13 We developed a domestic intervention  
14 program and I am just so heartened to see  
15 communities across this nation, and I look  
16 forward this afternoon, to seeing how the  
17 community of Cleveland is galvanized or focused  
18 on the problem of domestic violence. But key to  
19 this is a court that understands how important a  
20 domestic violence case is, how important it is  
21 not just a fashioned punishment to suit the  
22 crime, but fashion the solutions that cause the  
23 domestic violence in the first place.

24 Again, if we are in a community  
25 setting, that community police officer trained

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1 in reacting to domestic violence can be the  
2 marvelous eyes and ears of a court that can  
3 supervise and if we can generate resources to  
4 bring to that community domestic violence  
5 counselors who are skilled in dealing with the  
6 problem, we can do so much more than we do now  
7 in so many instances where our efforts are so

8 fragmented.

9 Drug courts are another example. I was  
10 frustrated to see people get probation, have  
11 probation officers with case loads so huge they  
12 could never focus on the young person who was  
13 the first offender charged with possession of a  
14 small amount of drugs. If we developed a drug  
15 court with the judge being key to the court, the  
16 person would have to come back before the court  
17 on a regular basis for the first two weeks and  
18 then continue to report to the court on a  
19 regular basis. Again, if that court had the  
20 setting of a community court it could make a  
21 difference, particularly if that judge could  
22 also focus other issues that were coming before  
23 other courts that affected that youngster and  
24 that youngster's family.

25 People say, Janet, it sounds fine, but

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1 will it work? It is at the heart of what we  
2 talk about. It is at the heart of justice.  
3 Community justice is about doing justice by  
4 emphasizing a problem solving orientation, a  
5 focus on community and victim and an approach to  
6 public safety that looks at the big picture.

7 I have this image of a hill in England  
8 in about 1200 when people first started  
9 tinkering with something that came to be called  
10 the jury system. They probably had a dispute as  
11 to who hit who first or who stole whose cow.  
12 They didn't develop an elaborate system. They  
13 just said, okay, you six, one, two, three, four,  
14 five, six, come over here and decide this case.  
15 Those jurors knew the people involved. Justice  
16 was done and the very bedrock of our whole  
17 system of law and justice in this country has  
18 evolved from that.

19 We can take some lessons and go back to  
20 that hill in England and focus on communities  
21 like that hill in England and bringing people to  
22 the courts and the courts to the people. But I  
23 think that there are two essentials to this

24 effort. It will not be done without citizens  
25 who volunteer. Pro bono is a wonderful word

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1 that lawyers developed. I just wish they'd  
2 learn how to say volunteer your services. But  
3 lawyers and doctors and so many citizens want to  
4 volunteer. Sometimes they don't know how.

5 If we in the community court setting  
6 set up a structure to show everyone, whether it  
7 be the Attorney General of the United States or  
8 the doctor, how to volunteer -- I volunteer in a  
9 public school in Washington on a regular basis.  
10 Doctors want to volunteer, but they're afraid of  
11 liability.

12 Let us set up structures and systems  
13 where everyone can participate and can truly  
14 make a difference. Let us realize the senior  
15 citizens in a condominium complex ten miles  
16 outside of town would love to volunteer if we  
17 could set up a transportation system that made  
18 it convenient for them. Let us understand that  
19 they don't like bureaucracies and they don't  
20 like a lot of red tape and let us develop  
21 systems for volunteering that recognize the  
22 wonderful work that volunteers do.

23 So many people suggest to me these days  
24 that volunteering is passe. Both parents are  
25 working, people are having to work two jobs,

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1 there's a matter of billable hours. One thing I  
2 would say to the law firms, let's stop worrying  
3 so much about billable hours and let's figure  
4 how we can work together to build communities  
5 that can make a difference through volunteering  
6 our services.

7 What is so important though is that we  
8 must harness the tremendous energies of young  
9 people. This summer I spoke to a classroom  
10 called a presidential classroom and 300 high  
11 school juniors and seniors come from around the  
12 nation to hear from various people. I spoke

13 with them and then answered their questions. I  
14 have now received two letters from young men in  
15 that program saying I was so excited about your  
16 thoughts about public service and volunteering.  
17 What can I do as a senior in high school to make  
18 a difference in my community?

19 There are young people throughout  
20 Cleveland and this nation that want so to  
21 contribute, so to make a difference and the more  
22 we can develop programs that harness that  
23 marvelous energy, that marvelous creativity,  
24 that marvelous sense of I can do anything, the  
25 better we all will be for it.

19

1 But as we harness the energy of  
2 volunteers, one of the keys to our effort is  
3 something to recognize, something exciting  
4 happening in this nation. The people, whether  
5 they be lawyers or school teachers or business  
6 people, are learning how to resolve their  
7 disputes: Young people without knives and guns  
8 and fists and lawyers without trials and complex  
9 costly litigation.

10 We've got to give to people of this  
11 country the skills they need to resolve their  
12 conflicts peacefully. Some people say you can't  
13 teach that. When I went to Harvard Law School,  
14 Roger Fisher was teaching me civil procedure and  
15 I don't know that he started talking about  
16 negotiation or getting to yes yet, but since  
17 that time he and others I think have clearly  
18 demonstrated to the legal profession that we can  
19 do so much in terms of learning negotiation  
20 skills and how to resolve disputes without  
21 resorting to costly litigation.

22 If we can teach young people to read  
23 and write and use computers, we ought to be able  
24 to teach them how to resolve conflicts without  
25 knives and guns and fists. The educational

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1 community, the legal community, all of us must

2 learn these new skills and this new attitude.

3 The widespread interest in conflict  
4 resolution and mediation is to me one of the  
5 most exciting things seen in this country in the  
6 last several years. I've got lawyers now who  
7 want to mediate and negotiate and not go to  
8 trial and that's very refreshing. Now, for the  
9 trial lawyers in the room, I don't take a thing  
10 away from the trial lawyers because you can't  
11 negotiate well unless you know you can go in and  
12 try that case.

13 But I sat with teachers who went to the  
14 District of Columbia public schools this summer  
15 at their own expense to learn how to work with  
16 kids to resolve conflicts and I have seen kids  
17 learning in school settings the same thing. Let  
18 us apply the sense of community. Let us apply  
19 the sense of giving. Let us apply the sense of  
20 theory that if we try hard enough and  
21 communicate together seriously enough we ought  
22 to be able to resolve most of that which causes  
23 us to split apart.

24 It's been a little over three and a  
25 half years since I came to Washington very

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1 suddenly. I've had a chance to visit Cleveland  
2 now as I said four times, to see so many  
3 communities. I have always loved this nation.  
4 I always believe profoundly in the strength of  
5 this nation, but because of what people are  
6 doing in communities across this land, never,  
7 ever have I believed so strongly and so deeply  
8 in this nation, its strength and its sense of  
9 justice. Now we must do more and make sure that  
10 all Americans have an opportunity to achieve  
11 justice for all.  
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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.

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

My commission expires June 28, 1997.