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OJJDP National Conference

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Juvenile Justice At The Crossroads

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Keynote Address by

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The Honorable Janet Reno, Attorney General

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Friday, December 13, 1996

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Renaissance Hotel

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

2 Thank you, Lynn. And my thanks to
3 you all. But I'm the one that should be
4 applauding you for your work in Baltimore,
5 Maryland, and your work across this country.

6 There are so many dedicated people in
7 this room who I think are the heroes and the
8 heroines of this nation, people who care about
9 children, care about giving them a future, care
10 about holding them accountable, care about
11 making sure that they can live up to their
12 fullest potential.

13 I discovered about twelve years ago
14 that raising children is one of the most single
15 difficult jobs in the world. It takes love,
16 hard work, and an awful lot of luck. It is
17 also one of the most rewarding experiences.

18 What you do in terms of giving a
19 future to children who have nobody to raise
20 them, or who have children who need that
21 additional help, you just do such a great job
22 for this country. And I just want to say thank

3

1 you.

2 I want to say thank you to all the
3 people in OJJDP who do such a wonderful job day
4 in and day out. Caring, trying to do the right
5 thing, focused on the facts, focused on hard
6 data as to what we can do to make a difference
7 for our children.

8 And we've got to do that. We've got
9 to do it just from the basis of common
10 humanity. But, then, if you find somebody that
11 doesn't understand what common humanity means,
12 point out to them that, unless we make an
13 investment in our children, we're not going to
14 have a workforce with the skills that can fill
15 the jobs that can maintain this great nation.

13 Let's have hard data, current data
14 that can make a difference in informing this
15 nation about what works and what doesn't work.
16 Because I haven't met anybody, not a
17 Congressman, not a person who wouldn't rather
18 invest up front in preventing the crime if they
19 know that prevention dollar will work. The
20 more we can show it will work, the more we can
21 show that juvenile justice can work, the more
22 investment we are going to have in this system.

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1 Now, OJJDP has heard me say this. I
2 used to get wonderful books when I was the
3 prosecutor in Miami. They have a lot of
4 information in them. I got real excited and
5 turned in and found the information was three
6 or four years old.

7 We've got to have current information
8 out to the field so that they can use it in
9 ways to help now with city commissions, with
10 county commissions. We've got to have it in a

11 form that everybody can understand and
12 appreciate.

13 And then we have got to talk about
14 this issue based on fact, not politics, not
15 thirty-second sound bites, but what works.
16 This is not a Republican issue, this is not a
17 Democratic issue. This is a people's issue.
18 This is this nation's issue. And we've got to
19 approach it from a bipartisan thoughtful way
20 based on facts and not demography.

21 Earlier this year we saw the
22 announcement of the reduction in overall

6
1 juvenile violent crime and a significant drop
2 in homicide arrest. I didn't believe those
3 figures at first. I kept going back to the
4 people and saying, just make sure you're right.
5 Just make double sure you're right.

6 And let us -- no one can take credit
7 for all of this. Let us recognize that this is

8 a reflection of the effort of so many.

9 Yesterday, after they went back and
10 dug, and dug, and dug, and looked at it some
11 more, they came up with new information which I
12 understand has been shared with you that helps
13 us understand better the decline in the
14 juvenile crime rates.

15 This analysis of the UCR reports
16 reveals that that decrease we saw this past
17 year in overall juvenile justice crime arrests
18 was driven by young juveniles 14 years of age
19 and under.

20 For those of you who haven't seen it,
21 you can look at the yellow charts that I
22 understand have been handed out to see what I

1 am describing.

2 While juveniles 14 and under are
3 responsible for only 30 percent of juvenile
4 violent crime arrests in 1995, they account for
5 over half of the decline in juvenile violent

7

6 crime arrests. The decline in property arrests
7 is 100 percent accounted for by these young
8 juveniles.

9 What this means, I think, is that
10 kids 14 and under are reflecting what you have
11 been doing in your communities. In order to
12 ensure that this trend continues though, we
13 can't say, well, we've done the job, and go
14 home. It's not going to work.

15 You all know that the number of young
16 people will increase significantly in the next
17 10 or 15 years. The pressures on the system
18 are going to become greater. The demands for
19 resources will be greater. We cannot relax.
20 And we saw some other disturbing information in
21 the analysis that I just referred to.

22 The female proportion of juvenile

8
1 arrests is growing. In fact, increases in
2 arrests between 1991 and 1995 were greater for

3 juvenile females than juvenile males in most
4 offense categories.

5 This issue merits our attention and
6 our concern. OJJDP has just recently funded a
7 training and technical assistance program that
8 will assist practitioners in implementing
9 gender specific programming to address this
10 problem. But we must do more to combat this
11 increasing delinquency and crime among young
12 women. We must renew our efforts across the
13 board.

14 As most of you know, I served as a
15 prosecutor in Miami for fifteen years. I'd
16 pick up the presentence investigation for the
17 seventeen year old, and I could see four or
18 five points along the way where we could have
19 intervened and have made a difference in the
20 life of that child.

21 But I saw that child drawn through a
22 system where social service agencies may have

1 touched him or her earliest, or a police
2 officer may have touched the family in a
3 violent situation at one point, where the
4 school touched the child at another point.

5 Where some parks and recreation
6 specialists may have reached out for that child
7 one summer and tried to make a difference, and
8 where the juvenile justice system received the
9 child after other institutions failed.

10 And I saw the child kind of floating
11 through a puzzle, a puzzle that had not come
12 together, a community that had not come
13 together to reweave the fabric of community
14 around that child.

15 And it seems to me that we have a
16 golden opportunity based on what you're doing
17 today. Our jurisdictions across the country
18 are suffering from the same situation that I
19 saw exist in Dade County.

20 The juvenile justice system has too
21 often, despite our best efforts, become

22 divorced and remote from the lives of people in

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1 neighborhoods across the land. Community
2 residents too often don't know who the judges
3 are.

4 They don't know how the process
5 works, especially when it comes to the juvenile
6 justice system. They are suspicious of it.
7 And they have no faith that the juvenile who
8 enters the system will be held accountable.

9 In addition, we do not come together
10 with others in the community to analyze the
11 nature or the problems facing us. Or if we do
12 so, we do so downtown in some office that has
13 no relation to the neighborhood, to the people,
14 to the problems involved.

15 If we do so, we do so too often, in
16 kind of an idealistic ivory tower rather than
17 concentrating on a community, or a
18 neighborhood's problems, on who is strong, who
19 can help that child, who can work together with

20 that child.

21 The need to do this, to forge closer
22 connections between the juvenile justice

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1 system, the community, and all the community
2 institutions I think is critical.

3 To address this situation, I think we
4 can learn from some things that are happening
5 in this country today from some of the things
6 that you're doing, from community policing.

7 Earlier on, after I'd become Attorney
8 General, I went to Dorchester, Massachusetts,
9 to a community policing event. And I saw young
10 people working with their community police
11 officers in extraordinary ways. There was not
12 suspicion. There was not distrust.

13 There was trust, there was support,
14 there was mentoring. And it gave me a new
15 insight into what police officers can do when
16 they go into the community, get to know the

17 people they serve, build the trust, and involve
18 the citizens, including the young people, in
19 identifying the problems and priorities, and
20 working together to do something about it.

21 Shortly thereafter, two of the young
22 men came with two community police officers to

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1 the Justice Department to discuss community
2 policing. The President came over that day.
3 And I'll never forget those two young men
4 saying, Mr. President, these guys got me out of
5 trouble. These guys made a difference in my
6 life because they trusted me enough to hold me
7 accountable, and yet gave me enough support to
8 help me make it down the road.

9 Let us consider what we might do if
10 we focused on juvenile community justice with a
11 judge assigned to a neighborhood. Now, you'll
12 say we don't have enough money to do that.
13 Just take a case load in a neighborhood instead
14 of having the judge downtown, find a good place

15 in the neighborhood, set it up.

16 But then that won't work. Cities and
17 counties have got to reach out to the juvenile
18 courts and say, how can we form these community
19 courts so that we take the city and county
20 services and assign them to the courts so that
21 they can work together.

22 We've got to have the schools working

13

1 with the system. We've got to have probation
2 officers involved at the community level.
3 Instead of a probation officer knocking on
4 doors around a community that stretches 25
5 miles from one end to the other, have the
6 probation officers in the community who know
7 the families, know who's there, know where to
8 go, know that sometimes they have to knock on
9 the door at 10:00 at night to make sure the
10 kid's home. And if he's not home, go find him,
11 and find out what's wrong, and do something

12 about it.

13 But talk about justice in human
14 terms, not as a case number. Not as a name
15 that is unknown and unmatched to a face, but a
16 real live human beings with a potential
17 success if we give them half a fighting chance.

18 Think of what we can do if we look at
19 the picture as a whole. All of you in this
20 room know that so much of delinquency starts
21 from family violence at home.

22 The child who sees his father beat

14
1 his mother comes to accept violence as a way of
2 life. Let's stop it early. We know that the
3 child who is abused and neglected often times
4 grows up to be the delinquent. Let's stop it
5 early.

6 How do we do that?

7 In the Crime Act passed in 1994,
8 President Clinton made a special commitment,
9 and is especially proud of the monies for

10 violence against women, monies that are now
11 going in significant measure to every state in
12 this nation.

13 Just think of what would happen if
14 cities and counties in the court system
15 organize together to make sure that we got
16 monies into those neighborhoods where there was
17 a high incidence of family violence.

18 And organize, so that not only was
19 there an intervention by a community police
20 officer at a family violence situation, but
21 there was a follow-up from social service
22 workers who knew that community with the kids,

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1 who observed the violence, to interrupt the
2 cycle of violence before it started.

3 And when that child came to the
4 preschool, and there was obvious evidence of
5 abuse but nobody could really find out what
6 happened, you made an intervention, not if

7 necessarily in a criminal justice sense, but
8 with a public health nurse assigned to that
9 neighborhood who went with the community police
10 officer to knock on the door to find out what
11 was happening.

12 And instead of waiting for that woman
13 to become a confirmed crack addict, let's
14 intervene up front, making sure, in a
15 neighborhood setting, that she gets the
16 treatment without approbation, she gets the
17 treatment that can get her off on the right
18 foot before she becomes a confirmed user.

19 Let's just use common sense and go
20 back to people and their problems and start to
21 solve them. Let's make that judge the force in
22 that community, so that, when he sees children

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1 in a public housing project at 3:00 in the
2 afternoon wandering unsupervised at age four
3 and five, that he says, let's develop a program
4 to ensure that every child in this neighborhood

5 has appropriate supervision during nonschool
6 hours.

7 Let's make sure that every child in
8 this neighborhood, if we see them truant at
9 11:00 in the morning, is not just picked up and
10 returned to the school. And then the school
11 sends him home because mamma doesn't come get
12 him.

13 But, instead, the public health
14 nurse, and the community police officer knock
15 on the door to find out why mother didn't come
16 get him. And if there is abuse and neglect
17 ongoing, let's get the process started through
18 appropriate interventions.

19 I have watched so many juvenile court
20 judges, saints, but saints so often who are
21 moved in some downtown courthouse, some remote
22 place where they don't know what's happening in

1 the neighborhood.

2 Think of what we could do if we took
3 their strengths, and as cities and counties,
4 organize services around those courts and
5 neighborhoods with high incidents of
6 delinquency. We could make such a difference.

7 Nobody has really gotten all the way
8 down the line, but there are bits and pieces
9 coming together. But think what could happen
10 for the kid that finally got in trouble at 12.
11 You could have an early assessment.

12 You could find, if you haven't
13 already found by the community working together
14 that he was falling two grade levels behind.
15 You could develop tutoring programs with people
16 from the neighborhood.

17 Because that's another thing.
18 Everybody is suffering from reduced resources.
19 But we've got to, in this community justice
20 setting, organize volunteers. There is a great
21 untapped resource out there. And let me show
22 you what I mean.

1 About four weeks ago, about 20 of us
2 from the Department of Justice volunteered for
3 a day at Habitat for Humanity. We walked into
4 what seemed like a shell. And I thought, what
5 are these people with five thumbs going to do,
6 and with no experience in building, this is
7 going to be a mess.

8 They had two or three superb
9 supervisors who said, don't worry, we're going
10 to come behind you. We'll make sure you don't
11 mess up. And here's what you do. We didn't
12 stop working except for lunch. And when we
13 left, that place looked like a house.

14 Just think of what we can do if we
15 have community police officers who make a
16 community safe so that that retired school
17 teacher will feel free to come out from behind
18 her door and go tutor the young man that the
19 judge finds needs tutoring to get him off on
20 the right foot, rather than being put into a

21 detention facility.

22 But then you're going to have kids

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1 that still get in trouble. Instead of having
2 one judge look at the child and then come back
3 after you can't remember, the judge is going to
4 say, now, you were here six months ago. And we
5 did this.

6 And I promised you there was going to
7 be an increasing sanction. Our sanctions are
8 going to be fair. They're going to be firm.
9 They're going to be -- they're going to fit the
10 crime.

11 But I told you, if you kept getting
12 in trouble, they were going to get stiffer
13 every step of the way. And this is what I'm
14 going to do. He sends him to secure detention.
15 But he's coming out sooner rather than later.

16 And let us develop aftercare programs
17 in this community setting that make sure that
18 kids who may have to go back to the apartment

19 over the open-air drug market, let's make sure
20 that he has an aftercare system, and a support
21 system in the community that can make a
22 difference.

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1 In short, let's just take the
2 tremendous resources that exist in this country
3 today, teachers who care, judges who care,
4 nurses who care. And let's organize them the
5 right way based on human beings, and not
6 arbitrary jurisdictional structures.

7 Let's organize them based on
8 neighborhoods where they can concentrate in
9 helping to make families self-sufficient. Let
10 us concentrate them in neighborhoods so that
11 they give our youngsters half a fighting
12 chance.

13 Now, you may say, where is it
14 beginning to work. I've seen one city, for
15 example, come together, not as much as it

16 might, but it is making a difference. And
17 Boston is doing some wonderful things in
18 bringing community probation officers to work
19 with community police officers, with church
20 groups.

21 A local hospital is working with the
22 court to intervene with victims, recognizing

21

1 that the victim of the gunshot wound is going
2 to be the perpetrator three weeks later for
3 revenge unless we intervene to break the cycle
4 of violence.

5 You all are on the front line. You
6 know better than anybody what's needed. But
7 we've got to stop wringing our hands and
8 saying, it's just a matter of resources, we
9 don't have enough resources. And just show
10 what we can do when we organize together and
11 use all of the resources involved.

12 One of the points though, as we see
13 things begin to work, we've got to report them,

14 and we've got to subject them to evaluation.

15 Now, I remember when the feds used to come to
16 town after they'd given me a grant.

17 And I finally decided the grant
18 wasn't worth it, because I didn't understand
19 the fed's forms. And they quibbled with me
20 about this and that and the other. And I said,
21 well, here's all the data. Well, you don't
22 have it in the right way, just shift it around

22

1 this way.

2 Evaluation doesn't have to be a
3 burden. Evaluation of what we're doing, every
4 one of us should be evaluating what we do. Not
5 from the point of view of having to do it, but
6 because it's fun. It's interesting.

7 Okay. This doesn't work. Let's get
8 rid of it and let's start something else. But
9 let's not throw the whole baby out with the
10 bath water because it might require just a

11 little tweaking here. And this data over here
12 indicates that if we tweak a little bit here we
13 can make a difference.

14 But let's stop getting into ruts
15 where we go down, we have a grant, we defend
16 the grant. Let's start asking, does it really
17 work? Does this work? Have I bought -- been
18 wrong here. We can't be afraid to say we've
19 been wrong. But then let's get the data
20 together. Let's evaluate, let's share.

21 Let's subject our work to the best
22 statistical scrutiny that we can, because we

23

1 have a wonderful opportunity. Americans across
2 this land care so much. They want to see
3 things work. They want to volunteer. They
4 want to make a difference.

5 If we can harness the energies of
6 this nation around real people, around real
7 neighborhoods, if we can share with everyone
8 what works and what doesn't work, if we can not

6 They're good guys. They just need some support
7 and understanding. And if there was somebody
8 to understand them, and somebody to talk to
9 them, it'd make a big difference.

10 And I was reminded of a youngster in
11 a detention facility in the Midwest that I met.
12 I said, what would you do if you were the
13 Attorney General to make a difference.

14 I'd have somebody for us to talk to,
15 somebody who understands how hard it is to grow
16 up in this country today, somebody that could
17 give me a pat on the back when I deserved it,
18 and a swift figurative kick in the pants when I
19 deserved that, too.

20 And I'd have something for us to do
21 in the afternoon and in the evenings that could
22 keep us out of trouble.

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1 Out of the mouths of babes comes the
2 greatest wisdom of all.

3 Let us listen to our young people as

4 we reweave the fabric of community and of
5 family around these wonderful beings who want
6 so much to contribute to this nation, who want
7 so much to grow up to be somebody, to make a
8 difference, to have a family, to be involved,
9 and who can because they are strong and
10 wonderful if they are only given half a
11 fighting chance.

12 With the energy in this room, there
13 is no doubt that if we go forward from this
14 conference together and work as hard as we can
15 in this year, we can come back with even better
16 figures to rejoice upon.

17 (Applause)

18 MALE VOICE: The Attorney General has
19 graciously agreed to stay for a few extra
20 minutes and entertain a couple of questions if
21 you have any of her. And I will facilitate
22 that process.

1 So we have just a few minutes, so
2 please step forward if you'd like to ask the
3 Attorney General a question.

4 We have one question here. Let's go
5 with this question first, and then we'll go
6 with Betty Charmer's question.

7 MALE VOICE: Good morning. My name
8 is (inaudible) Maddox. And I'm from the Safe
9 Teacher's Program, a board of director's
10 program in Boston, Massachusetts.

11 One of the things we've looked at,
12 and we're trying to do in Boston, and probably
13 other folks are probably trying to do this
14 elsewhere in the country, is trying to
15 incorporate youth entrepreneurial aspects to
16 our program.

17 Because, as you say, my experience in
18 the criminal justice system, particular in
19 corrections in Boston, all too often when young
20 people come out of these places, they go right
21 back to what they were doing before,
22 particularly if it's economic based.

1 Now, we feel that there should be a
2 little more emphasis on this aspect of things.
3 And we want to know how can we expect to get
4 the support for these types of programs?

5 MS. RENO: One of the suggestions,
6 and I'm not sure just what you're doing, and I
7 don't know if it ties in. And what I'd love to
8 do as we follow up with (inaudible) and make
9 sure we've got information.

10 One of the -- just a small piece, a
11 small beginning. In one of the Boston programs
12 that I saw, I saw John Hancock involved in
13 terms of identifying community police officers
14 and probation officers facing exactly the
15 problem you've talked about, and said, what are we
16 going to do.

17 These youngsters don't know how to
18 interview. They don't know to apply for a job.
19 They don't know the importance of getting to

20 work on time, or how to take directions. And
21 we need to start encouraging them in the right
22 direction.

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1 John Hancock responded by creating a
2 program that gave them on-the-job skills and
3 then has tried to place them. But I think you
4 have put your finger on what I think is one of
5 the great problems. And in some respects, it
6 doesn't have to do just with youth.

7 But where youth are at risk, we need
8 to see what we can do to develop job
9 opportunities that are real. And that comes
10 back to skill training. There's some
11 interesting work.

12 And I'm trying to learn more about
13 it, about how we, instead of trying to change
14 market forces that send a kid two bus trips
15 across town and make it very difficult for him
16 to get to work, how do we use the energy in
17 communities? How do we use their location to

18 create an economic opportunity for an
19 entrepreneur?

20 If we don't find them jobs, we're
21 going to be in the same situation. And so,
22 what I would suggest is, where I see it working

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1 is the neighborhood going to identifying the
2 neighborhood with high delinquency, going to
3 the large employers in the community and
4 saying, let us work together.

5 This is your job force, this is your
6 workforce for the future. There is some
7 progress being made, but we've got a long way
8 to go. And that brings me back to skill
9 training.

10 The best programs that I have seen,
11 in terms of juvenile justice where detention is
12 required, or confinement is required, or even
13 in terms of supervised probations, intensely
14 supervised probation is the program that starts

15 while the child is under supervision, or
16 confined, and focuses them on the real world of
17 jobs and how you get a job, then brings them
18 out, and if they're old enough gets them a job,
19 but then requires that they go find a job on
20 their own so that they can learn how to do it
21 for the future.

22 Those programs seem to be working

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1 significantly in reducing recidivism. But it's
2 part of the education and part of the message
3 that we have got to give, all of us. If you
4 don't care about children because of common
5 humanity, then think about them as your
6 workforce for the future.

7 MALE VOICE: Penny.

8 PARTICIPANT: I'd like to ask you a
9 question and have you expand a little bit on
10 your idea, this juvenile justice community
11 model, which is an intriguing idea. I would
12 suspect that you have talked about this model

13 as you travel throughout the country.

14 What has been the response of the
15 judges in this country, and what are some of
16 the (inaudible). You talk about the
17 (inaudible) then maybe we can think about a
18 strategy to approach it. Because it is an idea
19 I rule that's worth exploring.

20 MS. RENO: The reaction has been
21 wonderful. I went to the State Chief Justices'
22 Conference. And we now have regular quarterly

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1 meetings with their executive committee. And I
2 hope to be meeting with them in February.

3 I challenge them to consider with me,
4 and to work with me in developing community
5 courts, not -- I didn't specify juvenile
6 courts. But I talked specifically in terms of
7 the family and children. And they responded
8 magnificently.

9 I met with all of the Judges, all of

10 the Chief Justices. And what I find is very
11 encouraging. Judges realize that they can play
12 an appropriate activist's role in terms of
13 judicial administration, not in terms of the
14 case itself, but in terms of judicial
15 administration.

16 And I see some progressive and
17 far-sided thinking on the part of the Chief
18 Justices. To give you an example on the other
19 side of the coin, as to how a judge and the
20 courts can be instrumental, in Dade County we
21 initiated a drug court back in about 1989.

22 I think, I and the public defender,

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1 would could work together pretty well, but I
2 don't think between the two of us we could have
3 gotten that started. It was the fact that the
4 Supreme Court of Florida freed a circuit
5 judge's time and gave him, not a leave of
6 absence, but an assignment to establish a drug
7 court and focus on the treatment.

5 they're known as the bad kid in the community.

6 And that's going to have to be the
7 attention that we always focused on. How do we
8 ensure justice? How do we prevent the
9 labeling? How do we give kids an opportunity?
10 How do we give kids the support?

11 I look at it this way. I made
12 reference to my experience in raising children.
13 A friend died in 1984 leaving me as the legal
14 guardian of 15-year-old twins. And that's
15 where I'm learning how hard it is. It's also
16 been one of my rewarding tasks in my life.

17 But it's the same way. You've got to
18 make sure that you don't label the children you
19 love, that you give them the support, that you
20 work through the issues, that you provide
21 justice, that you hold them accountable.

22 And so, I think the biggest

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1 impediment is going to be, or the biggest fear

2 I have, is that the justice system can be

3 adversely impacted.

4 The second greatest impediment, and
5 it's not an impediment of will, I think it's
6 more of an impediment -- it's so hard to get
7 things changed. And I've discovered that in
8 Washington.

9 (Applause)

10 Has OJP talked to the criminal
11 division? Have you talked to the U.S.
12 Attorneys? Has OJJDP worked with somebody else
13 on this particular issue? What are you doing
14 in the office of victims of crime to relate to
15 youth victimization?

16 And it's so wonderful to see how
17 they're coming together and how they're
18 building a great team. But sometimes it takes
19 a little bit of time. Well, that's one thing.
20 But, then, if you have a school system run at
21 the state level but with local school boards,
22 and you have the county commission over here.

1 And then you have 26 cities in the county, and
2 the city line runs right up the middle of the
3 highest high-risk area in the city. And then
4 you have a state probation officer. But that's
5 different than a juvenile probation officer.

6 And you've got state court systems,
7 but that doesn't mesh with the county and the
8 city. It's a mess in terms of trying to get it
9 together. But I think that is our challenge
10 for America. Because I think what's happening
11 -- I think beginning in the depression, people
12 began to look for Washington as a place to get
13 problems solved.

14 With World War II, Washington became
15 truly the focus of the nation. With the 50's
16 and 60's, people looked to Washington for
17 Justice. In the 70's, they looked to Washington
18 for a lot of money. In the 80's Washington
19 started shifting the programs to the states
20 without the dollars.

21 And then I was in Tallahassee

22 lobbying the legislature. And I watched the

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1 legislature shift the programs to the
2 communities without the dollars. And then I
3 watched cities and counties with their backs up
4 against the wall. And I've seen it across the
5 country, start to say, okay, how do we reach
6 out?

7 And I think it's going to be up to
8 states and others to give flexibility at the
9 local level, for the federal government to give
10 flexibility at the local level to see what we
11 can do about organizing around people and not
12 just concepts.

13 PARTICIPANT: What suggestions do you
14 have for youth empowerment programs such as the
15 New Haven Board of Young Adult Police
16 Commissioners.

17 MS. RENO: Such as.

18 PARTICIPANT: The New Haven Board of

19 Young Adult Police Commissioners.

20 MS. RENO: I have heard of that
21 program and that sounds like a wonderful idea.

22 One of the things that I would do

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1 first, if I walked into a community and there
2 was no significant youth empowerment program,
3 is start organizing in the schools and asking
4 the young people how they could best organize
5 and how they could best work together.

6 I would try to organize it, again,
7 based on community. It depends on the size of
8 the community. And each -- a city may be
9 (inaudible) and then you could perhaps link
10 them through a coordinating committee.

11 But ask young people how they can
12 best serve and how they can best make a
13 difference. Work with community police
14 officers in identifying how we can work
15 together. Find the good teachers who
16 understand young people.

17 But, most of all, figure out the best
18 way to listen to young people, get their
19 reaction, identify the young people who can
20 really make a difference, and bring them
21 together.

22 PARTICIPANT: My name is (inaudible)

1 and I'm with Seattle's Safe Futures. I'm glad
2 to have an opportunity. I'm surprised, no one
3 else (inaudible). Even if I didn't have a
4 question, I probably would have come up here
5 anyway.

6 (Laughter and applause)

7 But I do have a question.

8 I'm a Vietnamese refugee of this
9 country back in '75. And in Seattle we have a
10 Two To Save Futures effort, we're having an
11 emphasis on helping Vietnamese and Cambodian
12 youths. But we want to help more. We just
13 have to concentrate because it's not enough

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14 resources.

15 There's been a lot of immigration
16 talk, as we all know. But I really think
17 immigration is really good, because we bring a
18 fresh perspective to their country. Oftentimes
19 we live there long enough that we get what we
20 truly have in the states, as well as our youth
21 don't know what they have in the states because
22 we're always concentrating on the negative

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1 aspect.

2 My question is, if we know -- usually
3 we know when the next phase of refugee or the
4 large immigration of the next refugee or
5 immigration comes into the states.

6 We should be anticipating in the
7 efforts of prevention, investigating so we can
8 set up the resources to help these parents that
9 don't speak English, help these parents that
10 want to do good, but have no resources. I'm
11 just wondering what you, or your department was

12 thinking about that.

13 Because what we find is when people
14 come into the country, they just can't help
15 their youth, such as the Vietnamese, and the
16 Cambodian, and soon to be the Russian,
17 Ethiopian, and Eastern European countries.

18 MS. RENO: Let me make one comment
19 first. My father was 12 years old when he came
20 from Denmark to (inaudible) Wisconsin. He
21 spoke not one word of English. And people
22 teased him about his funny language and his

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1 funny clothes.

2 The people who were doing most of the
3 teasing were second generation Danish children.
4 He never forgot that. And in four years he was
5 the editor of the high school newspaper. And
6 he became a reporter for the Miami Herald for
7 43 years and wrote beautiful English.

8 I'm just convinced, again, in this

9 age of decreasing resources, where I see the
10 best programs are where community groups have
11 organized to provide the opportunity to take
12 care of that seven-year-old of the new refugee
13 who had just come into the country, who's
14 starting to work.

15 And the person who's been here a
16 generation, or the person who has been here 15
17 years is the one that is reaching out and
18 helping that seven-year-old learn how to speak
19 English. We are committed in the Department of
20 Justice to maintaining this nation's tradition
21 as a nation of immigrants.

22 When this nation no longer has

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1 immigrants is the day it will not have the
2 vitality and the strength and the diversity and
3 the wonder of so many different backgrounds
4 that has made it, truly made it the greatest
5 nation in the world.

6 At the same time, we've got to

7 address the issue of illegal immigration. And
8 we're trying to do that according to principles
9 of due process and fair play, making sure that
10 there is no immigrant bashing along the way,
11 because it has been so wonderful.

12 Shortly after I took office, I opened
13 an envelope that had been sent to me. And out
14 scattered pictures of my grandfather who had
15 been a photographer in Denmark. And I opened
16 the letter, and the letter said, I don't know
17 whether I'm related to you, but I think I am.

18 And I know for sure, and knew for
19 sure. Again, we organize, if the immigrant
20 community organizes in the same way, if we
21 reach out, if they go call on the judge, if
22 they go knock on the door, if they form

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1 alliances, if those that have come before can
2 make the difference, we can do so much.

3 I don't think we can look in terms of

4 additional dollars. But what we have got to
5 fight for is to make sure that immigrants have,
6 who are lawfully here, have the benefits, the
7 schooling, the things they need to get off on
8 the right foot. And I think we can do that,
9 again focused on community justice concepts.

10 PARTICIPANT: (Inaudible) Center for
11 Dispute Resolution. And you mentioned about
12 resolutions in the schools and mediation in the
13 schools. And I just wanted to question, when I
14 was in North Carolina, we had county dispute
15 resolution centers that had volunteer
16 mediators.

17 And the court would often refer cases
18 which were felt should be mediated, or cases of
19 parent/child situations where they could be
20 mediated. And I was wondering what your
21 thoughts were about that, what your experience
22 is about community mediation programs working

1 with the courts?

2 MS. RENO: I think they are
3 absolutely -- I think they present a wonderful
4 opportunity, because something is happening
5 across this country that I find exciting.
6 Lawyers who've traditionally solved all their
7 problems in the court by cussing at each other
8 in a nice way in a court are suddenly
9 discovering that it's costly, and that they can
10 settle a lot of their disputes by learning how
11 to negotiate.

12 We go to law school to learn how to
13 try cases, but we have rarely learned how to
14 negotiate cases. So, for example, in the
15 Department of Justice, we're focusing a great
16 deal on appropriate dispute resolution.

17 In the workplace we're seeing the
18 same opportunities arise with the enforcement
19 of the Americans With Disabilities Act. But I
20 think in a community setting if we, first of
21 all, if we require that every school, that
22 everyone learn how to negotiate, and how to

1 problem solve, and how to communicate, we could
2 make such a difference.

3 And it can be done. There are some
4 wonderful courses being given to Washington,
5 D.C., school teachers and to youngsters who are
6 participating in dispute resolution programs.
7 And they can make such a difference.

8 So, in my image that I have of this
9 community juvenile justice system, is you will
10 have people well trained as mediators able to
11 understand children, appreciating children,
12 appreciating some of the communications issues
13 with children, and the body language, that they
14 could be both mediators and problem solvers.

15 Mediation takes different forms. As
16 I understand it, the mediator is supposed to
17 stay out of coming up with the problem and help
18 the others come up with it, but sometimes we
19 need problem solving, too.

20 But can't you imagine, if the

21 juvenile court judge in that community had the
22 opportunity to refer on a regular basis to the

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1 mediation program, but followed up to make sure
2 that it just didn't fade off, we could do so
3 much in making the difference.

4 Because that juvenile court judge may
5 be able to decide you're guilty, or you're not
6 guilty, or this should be done, or this
7 neighborhood situation needs to be resolved.
8 But the mediator can do it far better than the
9 court system can in the narrow confines of the
10 law.

11 So go to it. And I'd like to hear
12 more about what you're doing in New Mexico,
13 (inaudible) if you can hear about that.

14 Thank you all.

15 (Applause)

16 (End of Keynote Address by
17 Attorney General Reno)

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