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5 SPEECH OF UNITED STATES ATTORNEY GENERAL  
6 JANET RENO  
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10 JANUARY 15, 1997  
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13 10:30 A.M.  
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15 16TH STREET BAPTIST CHURCH  
16 BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA  
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20 REPORTED BY: ELEANOR S. PICKETT  
21 CERTIFIED SHORTHAND REPORTER  
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1 JANUARY 15, 1997 10:30 A.M.  
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3 MS. RENO: Thank you so much. I am so  
4 very honored to be here today at the 16th Street  
5 Baptist Church. And, Reverend Hamlin, I want to  
6 thank you for making me feel so welcome. Thank  
7 you for making me feel so welcome today and at  
8 home.

9 I am humbled by the opportunity to  
10 speak to you today, a day of such special  
11 importance to all this nation, the birth date of  
12 Dr. Martin Luther King. I wish every American  
13 could spend time, as I have this morning, walking  
14 through the Civil Rights Institute across the

15 street reading and rereading some of Dr. King's  
16 speeches, hearing them directly as he said them  
17 and trying to imagine what those days of April  
18 and May and September of 1963 were like.

19 Martin Luther King was a man who saw  
20 wrong and never ceased trying to right it. He  
21 felt the weight of oppression and he was never  
22 ever broken by it. His life embodied and he  
23 helped to define the true spirit of this great  
24 nation, our quest for justice. And he was able  
25 to express his outrage in yearning for justice so

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1 forcefully and so eloquently that he reached into  
2 the soul of America and America responded.

3 Dr. King had the strength of spirit to  
4 withstand jail and march in the midst of angry  
5 racism and he had the courage to battle hate with  
6 love. He did all this to bring America together  
7 as never before.

8 It was here in Birmingham and here at  
9 the 16th Street Baptist Church that America  
10 witnessed some of the most heroic efforts and  
11 some of the lowest, darkest moments of the civil  
12 rights struggle. It was here in this church  
13 thirty-four years ago that an ugly, horrible  
14 racist attack took the innocent lives of four  
15 young girls who were getting ready to participate  
16 in their first adult service. They were growing  
17 up. I'm honored that Altha Robertson and  
18 Commissioner Chris McNair and Ms. McNair and the  
19 Collins family are here with us today.

20 Let me say to you today what Dr. King  
21 said thirty-four years ago. Death is not an end  
22 for these girls. They are living still in our  
23 memory and their power still moves us.

24 It was from this very church earlier in  
25 that same year that thousands of young people,

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1 children really, assembled for a nonviolent  
2 demonstration and they went to jail to protest  
3 segregation. The next day when more students and

4 adults went to demonstrate, Bull Connor let loose  
5 his dogs, his clubs and his hoses right outside  
6 here in Kelly Ingram Park. We walked across that  
7 park this morning to imagine what it was like  
8 then and to see what it has become is a monument  
9 to Dr. King and to the people of Birmingham who  
10 care and will not stop in their quest for  
11 liberty, for justice and in the efforts to bring  
12 this nation together.

13 Those demonstrations broke the back of  
14 segregation in Birmingham and helped America come  
15 together. These are there to remind us of the  
16 courage of ordinary citizens who daily met with  
17 hateful, hateful prejudice. These are to remind  
18 us of what one person can do, young or old,  
19 student or preacher. Each one of us can make a  
20 difference.

21 Martin Luther King was right when he  
22 said that one day the South will recognize its  
23 real heroes. One of those real heroes here in  
24 Birmingham was Arthur Shores who died just late  
25 last year. As one of the only African-American

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1 practicing attorneys in Alabama in the 1940s, Mr.  
2 Shores was a lone voice in the wilderness  
3 defending the civil rights of his people. He  
4 played a critical role during the '60s when he  
5 represented Dr. King and Fred Shuttlesworth. Dr.  
6 King, Arthur Shores, so many others, children,  
7 all are true heroes in the struggle for freedom  
8 and for civil rights for all in this country.  
9 They did so much to eliminate discrimination and  
10 hatred and to bring America together, but we must  
11 carry on.

12 There is today, as we try to carry on,  
13 real disagreement about what civil rights in  
14 today's world really means. There are some who  
15 think that we have gone too far, who think that  
16 we have already achieved the aims of the civil  
17 rights movement. I say that's not so. There are  
18 others who challenge the value and the fairness  
19 of the remedies of the civil rights movement.

20 Some Americans, including some minorities, now  
21 question whether integration is still a valid  
22 goal. I fear that what national consensus we  
23 have on civil rights may be at the risk of  
24 unravelling. And efforts to divide us along racial  
25 lines for political advantage or worse leave many

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1 wondering whether we'll move forward or slip  
2 backward in our common struggle for equal  
3 opportunity and fundamental fairness for every  
4 single American.

5 I say that we will move forward. I see  
6 the city of Birmingham saying we will move  
7 forward. We will not let be undone what those  
8 heroes in those days of the '60s worked so hard  
9 and gave their lives and support for this  
10 nation.

11 But as we move forward, it is not  
12 enough to dismiss every criticism as  
13 mean-spirited racism or narrow-minded ignorance.  
14 We need to examine ourselves and our world with a  
15 critical eye and an open mind. We have to ask  
16 the difficult questions and attempt to answer  
17 them. We must talk openly about race relations  
18 in this country. We must talk with respect, we  
19 must listen with a listening ear, we must get rid  
20 of the angry rhetoric that has so marked this  
21 issue in so many instances of late.

22 We know that not all our ills are  
23 explained by racism and other bias, but we also  
24 know that hate and prejudice and intolerance and  
25 discrimination still persist today and we can't

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1 tolerate that.

2 Our challenge is to remind ourselves of  
3 our common interests, our common ground and to  
4 remind ourselves of our common dreams. At  
5 bottom, the needs of those in the black  
6 community, the Hispanic community, the  
7 Asian-American community are all the same as  
8 those in the white community. Everyone wants a

9 healthy start for their children, a stable and  
10 crime-free neighborhood, quality education,  
11 supportive families and decent work  
12 opportunities. And remember that it was blacks  
13 and Hispanics and Asian-Americans and whites who  
14 fought so hard and some who gave their lives to  
15 defend this nation against the dark forces of  
16 tyranny as we saw in the moving ceremony this  
17 week when the seven brave soldiers were finally  
18 properly recognized.

19 We must recognize and reaffirm the ties  
20 that bind us and understand that we can't solve  
21 the problems of crime, of terrorism, of disease,  
22 of poverty in isolation each from the other. We  
23 must recognize our common humanity and by  
24 listening closely and reaching out to each other,  
25 we will find that there are ways to bring us

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1 together even more closely to bridge the  
2 differences that improperly separate us and to  
3 reaffirm our commitment to civil rights in  
4 America. We have much to do. For too often we  
5 live in our insular worlds with each of us  
6 enforcing our own voluntary racial separation.  
7 We pass each other on the streets or in the  
8 shopping mall, but we don't connect as  
9 individuals. We work together or we go to school  
10 together and we don't connect as individuals.

11 A 1995 Washington Post poll found that  
12 virtually half of those surveyed did not feel it  
13 was important that different racial or ethnic  
14 groups should live, go to school or work together  
15 so long as they were treated fairly. But this  
16 attitude comes dangerously close to the separate  
17 but equal doctrine that was so rightly rejected  
18 in Brown versus Board of Education. With this  
19 separation, we risk a lack of understanding of  
20 and appreciation for the views and the  
21 perspectives of others. We risk not learning of  
22 wonderful racial, ethnic and cultural traditions  
23 that make this country strong. Dr. King knew  
24 that you could eliminate legal segregation and

25 still not achieve integration. True integration

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1 he believed would be achieved by true neighbors.

2 This week especially, but in all weeks  
3 -- my mother said you should never celebrate  
4 Mother's Day because every day should be Mother's  
5 Day. But this week especially I would ask each  
6 one of us to reach out across racial differences  
7 to someone you work with or go to school with but  
8 really don't know. This weekend visit a church  
9 or temple with a different congregation so that  
10 this Sunday morning is not, in Dr. King's word,  
11 the most segregated hour in America. Take these  
12 small steps in our efforts to rebuild a sense of  
13 community where diversity is valued and  
14 intolerance is unacceptable. But we must do more  
15 by reaching out to help others regardless of race  
16 or ethnic background to reweave the fabric of  
17 community around us all.

18 Recently I spent a Saturday working for  
19 Habitat for Humanity. By the end of the day,  
20 blacks, whites, and Cuban-Americans had paint on  
21 their face, plaster in their hair and a new  
22 spirit in their hearts. Each of us can reach out  
23 to lend a hand, lift a spirit and bring America  
24 together.

25 President Clinton has made it a

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1 cornerstone of his agenda for the next term to  
2 unify the nation around its core values. He has  
3 pledged to bring us together, to bring the  
4 diverse strands of our people together and to  
5 foster an environment of reconciliation and  
6 mutual respect. The part says revolution, but  
7 the final word is reconciliation. These values  
8 are at the heart of civil rights and shape our  
9 civil rights agendas for the next term.

10 In this past year, we have seen a clear  
11 example of the challenges we still face to  
12 protect our civil rights and to eliminate hatred  
13 from this land. The senseless rash of church

14 burnings that have victimized and traumatized  
15 congregations and communities has stirred the  
16 national conscience. Any sort of desecration of  
17 any place of worship is among the most despicable  
18 crimes, reaching to the most deeply felt of all  
19 American tenets, freedom of religion. But the  
20 destruction particularly by fire of an  
21 African-American church resonates especially  
22 deeply in this country, harkening back to the  
23 bleak period when the bombing here at the 16th  
24 Street Baptist Church was one of many. And it is  
25 for these and many more reasons that the

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1 President has made it a top priority to prosecute  
2 those responsible for these origins, to prevent  
3 future damages of houses of worship and to help  
4 communities and congregations in their efforts to  
5 rebuild.

6 We have deployed over two hundred ATF  
7 and FBI investigations around the country to  
8 investigate these arsons. The National Church  
9 Arson Task Force is co-chaired by Assistant  
10 Attorney General Deval Patrick and Assistant  
11 Treasury Secretary James Johnson, and it has  
12 responded to these crimes by bringing together as  
13 partners the FBI, the ATF, Justice Department  
14 prosecutors, the United States attorneys have  
15 done such a wonderful job, the Community  
16 Relations Service, the Marshal Services in  
17 partnership with state and local law  
18 enforcement. We are committed to expending the  
19 necessary resources, the time and the effort to  
20 solve these crimes, and we are going to keep on  
21 working on it until we bring the people  
22 responsible for these desecrations to justice.

23 But there is a tremendous difference  
24 between the fires thirty years ago and those of  
25 today. Church attacks then had the support of

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1 too many people in the community. Today the  
2 reaction across this nation has been universal

3 outrage. These attacks are rightly seen as a  
4 threat to our common sense of sanctuary. These  
5 fires have also generated a tremendous response  
6 from our community, solidarity among followers of  
7 many faiths, donations of money, church robes,  
8 hymnals, pews and pianos, countless volunteers to  
9 help in rebuilding and preventing further  
10 tragedy.

11 It is a wonderful experience to hear a  
12 young teenager talk with pride of her trip to the  
13 South to help rebuild one of the churches  
14 attacked and to hear her talk of the welcome that  
15 she was given by that community.

16 This past year I traveled down a little  
17 old dirt road in South Carolina with the  
18 President to see the site of a church that was  
19 burned, only a magnificent oak tree which had  
20 half covered the church still stood. But then we  
21 went further down that road to dedicate the new  
22 church. The people of that community, black and  
23 white, came together to speak out against the  
24 hatred that had spawned that fire. Haters are  
25 cowards. When they are confronted, they will

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1 often back down. It is so important for all  
2 America to speak with one voice and consistently  
3 against the hate and the bigotry that is  
4 sometimes in our midst.

5 And there is a common thread through  
6 this nation. As I turned and walked off the  
7 platform after the church dedication, a woman  
8 burst through the lines and came up and gave me a  
9 big hug and said, "Hello, Janet. I used to live  
10 in Miami. You got me child support. And I want  
11 you to see the two young men you got child  
12 support for. And they are taller than me."

13 Our experience with church fires shows  
14 us at the very same time how much we have  
15 achieved and yet how much, much more we have to  
16 do. Yes, we have seen remarkable progress in our  
17 efforts to bridge the gap between our ideals and  
18 the harsh reality of the daily experience of many

19 citizens. Our national journey has taken us from  
20 segregated classrooms to integrated ones, from  
21 Jim Crow laws to civil rights laws for women,  
22 minorities and persons with disabilities, from  
23 literacy tests for voting to minority  
24 representation here in Alabama at every level of  
25 government, including the mayor of Birmingham and

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1 Congressman Hilliard in the Alabama Congressional  
2 Delegation. And the political inclusion that has  
3 been brought about by the Voting Rights Act has  
4 led to so much in our progress.

5 Just today the federal government is  
6 announcing additional resources to preserve the  
7 historic Selma-to-Montgomery trail that Dr. King  
8 and others marched along to dramatize the need  
9 for the Voting Rights Act.

10 We have come a long way, but thirty  
11 years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act  
12 and forty years after Brown versus Board of  
13 Education, racial prejudice and the corrosive  
14 effects of discrimination are still with us.

15 We cannot say that we have completed  
16 our journey when even today blacks and Hispanics  
17 and in many cases women still have a harder time  
18 of getting into college, renting an apartment,  
19 getting a job or obtaining a loan.

20 We have not completed our journey when  
21 the unemployment rate for black males is still  
22 twice as high as it is for white males. Even  
23 college-educated black, Hispanic, Asian-American  
24 men and women of every race and ethnic background  
25 are paid less than comparably educated,

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1 comparably trained white men. That's not right.

2 These problems are doubly difficult for  
3 black and Hispanic men and women who also have  
4 disabilities. Worst of all, reports of violent  
5 hate crimes against minorities and gays and  
6 lesbians are disturbingly high. If some of the  
7 church fires are any indication, hate itself has

8 become more brazen.

9 We have changed our laws, but we have  
10 not always changed our ways. Old habits die  
11 hard. Attitudes evolve slowly. We must do more,  
12 much more to open the doors of opportunity so  
13 that every American can share in and fully  
14 contribute to America's magnificent bounty.

15 The Department of Justice is committed  
16 to our mission which is, simply stated, to  
17 enforce the civil rights laws of this nation as  
18 vigorously and as faithfully as possible without  
19 fear or favor. I care so deeply about this  
20 mission which is one of the highest priorities of  
21 the Department of Justice. I'm one of the most  
22 fortunate people in the world in this last term  
23 to have Deval Patrick as the Assistant Attorney  
24 General in charge of the Civil Rights Division.  
25 He is one of the finest people I have ever known

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1 and one of the great public servants I have ever  
2 had the opportunity to work with.

3 He will be leaving at the end of this  
4 month to return to Boston to be with his family,  
5 and I think this nation, and I know I will, will  
6 miss his leadership, his vision, his intelligence  
7 and his courage.

8 The Division, the Civil Rights  
9 Division, had a reception for him yesterday and  
10 they promised him that they would not let our  
11 efforts to enforce the civil rights laws of this  
12 country be diminished in any way. And I think  
13 that's going to be their ultimate tribute to  
14 Deval Patrick.

15 We will be ever vigilant and ever  
16 forceful in bringing our cases, and I would like  
17 to highlight four areas which reflect our  
18 commitment to combating discrimination and to  
19 building trust and understanding among all  
20 Americans.

21 First is fair housing and fair lending,  
22 including business lending. Second is employment  
23 and affirmative action. Third is education. And

24 fourth is the building of trust between law  
25 enforcement and the minority community.

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1 In the next four years, I want to  
2 expand on our success in the area of fair lending  
3 and fair housing. Home ownership has profound  
4 significance in this country, and it is still at  
5 the center of the American dream. Yet many  
6 Americans are kept from that dream when they  
7 can't get a home mortgage and when they are  
8 denied home mortgages or property insurance on  
9 account of their race or national origin.

10 For years, disparities were explained  
11 in the industry as being justified solely by  
12 differences in creditworthiness. But the studies  
13 over the last several years have too often proved  
14 that explanation is flat and simply wrong.

15 Black and Hispanic applicants for loans  
16 are being denied financing at a much greater rate  
17 than white applicants with virtually identical  
18 qualifications. Some banks have simply not done  
19 business in minority neighborhoods, while others  
20 charge higher rates or add extra charges to their  
21 loans in minority areas.

22 We have used a two-prong approach to  
23 address this problem. First we have worked with  
24 the banking industry that wants to do right to  
25 reform their practices, and, secondly, for those

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1 who thumbed their noses, we have sued them and we  
2 are going to do whatever is necessary.

3 We are not asking banks to make bad  
4 loans. We are telling them that there is some  
5 business there that's good business that should  
6 not have been rejected on the grounds of race or  
7 national origin. And we are working with them to  
8 train their employees in practices and procedures  
9 that ensure that there is no discrimination. The  
10 results of these efforts have been remarkable in  
11 a very short period of time.

12 In part due to what we have done and

13 due in part to other factors, we have expanded  
14 the availability of loans to minorities. Between  
15 1992 and 1995, the numbers of home loans to  
16 minorities grew more than one hundred percent,  
17 twice the growth rate for home loans generally.  
18 Here in Alabama, the number of home loans to  
19 minority borrowers increased one hundred and  
20 twenty-two percent from 1992 to 1995, nearly  
21 three times the increase in lending to borrowers  
22 in the Alabama market as a whole.

23 We are also increasing our fair housing  
24 activity in Alabama and around the nation. The  
25 Civil Rights Division sent fair housing testers

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1 to Montgomery. Last summer we filed a record-  
2 setting one point eight million dollar settlement  
3 for housing discrimination against the owner of a  
4 number of apartment complexes in Mobile. We also  
5 work closely with fair housing groups that  
6 recently have been established in Birmingham and  
7 Montgomery. This type of work is taking place  
8 across the country. We will continue to try to  
9 eliminate discrimination in the housing and  
10 lending market so that all Americans can pursue  
11 their dream of home ownership.

12 I want to expand our fair lending work  
13 into the area of business lending. Access to  
14 capital is one of the most formidable barriers to  
15 the formation and development of minority  
16 businesses. Several studies have shown that  
17 minority applicants for business loans are more  
18 likely to be rejected, and when accepted, receive  
19 smaller loan amounts than white applicants with  
20 identical borrowing credentials. One recent  
21 Colorado study found that African-Americans were  
22 three times more likely to be rejected for  
23 business loans than whites, and that Hispanic  
24 owners were one and a half times more likely to  
25 be denied a business loan. That's not right, and

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1 the Department of Justice is exploring ways that

2 we can effectively confront discrimination in  
3 this arena.

4 In the next four years we will oppose  
5 efforts to limit our ability as a society to  
6 address unequal opportunity in the economy. We  
7 must do more to tap the inherent potential in  
8 every one of our citizens. For far too many, the  
9 promise of economic opportunity has a very hollow  
10 ring. All too often we learn of blatant  
11 discriminatory conduct in the employment context,  
12 discrimination based on race, gender or sexual  
13 orientation. But also there are more subtle  
14 influences of subjective factors making it more  
15 likely that we will hire and promote others like  
16 us with whom we may feel more comfortable.  
17 Social ties are often more important than actual  
18 experience and qualifications.

19 Some of the starkest evidence of this  
20 type of behavior comes from testing studies where  
21 white males receive fifty percent more job offers  
22 than minorities with the same qualifications  
23 applying for the same job. And the report of the  
24 Glass Ceiling Commission demonstrates that once  
25 minorities are in the workplace, their

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1 advancement is often hampered by discrimination.

2 The EEOC is the prime federal agency  
3 that sues over employment discrimination in the  
4 private sector. The Justice Department has  
5 responsibility over discrimination by public  
6 employers. But it is important to have a clear  
7 picture of discrimination in the workplace so  
8 that it can be addressed by the government as a  
9 whole.

10 The reality of current and ongoing  
11 discrimination was at the very heart of the  
12 President's decision to continue to support  
13 affirmative action.

14 In July of 1995, the President made  
15 clear that as a nation, we will not abandon our  
16 commitment to equal opportunity. But he also  
17 made clear that we need to refine the tool of

18 affirmative action so that it can be used fairly  
19 and effectively to help our society achieve its  
20 goal of integration and the elimination of  
21 discrimination. He said that we needed to mend,  
22 not end, affirmative action.

23 At the same time, the Supreme Court  
24 ruled in the Adarand case that when the federal  
25 government uses affirmative action, it has to do

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1 so in an especially careful way. But in writing  
2 for the court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor  
3 recognized the unhappy persistence of both the  
4 practice and the lingering effects of racial  
5 discrimination against minority groups. She  
6 confirmed that under the constitution, government  
7 has an obligation to address it and we will not  
8 shirk from that obligation.

9 This is one reason why we think  
10 California's Proposition 209, which establishes a  
11 sweeping ban on affirmative action in the state,  
12 is both unconstitutional and bad policy. It  
13 would prevent local jurisdictions and state  
14 agencies from recognizing the need for  
15 additional, well-fashioned affirmative action  
16 measures to overcome the effects of past  
17 discrimination and bring minorities into the  
18 economic mainstream. It would prevent victims of  
19 racial discrimination and gender discrimination  
20 from obtaining relief from local governments and  
21 state agencies short of amending the state  
22 constitution.

23 By singling out race and gender for  
24 this distortion of the ordinary political  
25 process, Proposition 209 denies equal protection

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1 of the laws. A federal judge just enjoined the  
2 state from implementing the California  
3 initiative. We agree with the court, and the  
4 Department of Justice will defend that decision.

5 It is also why efforts in Congress to  
6 curtail affirmative action by the federal

7 government are misguided and counterproductive  
8 towards our efforts of bringing this nation  
9 together and ensuring liberty and equality for  
10 all.

11 The Justice Department in light of the  
12 Adarand decision is already making certain that  
13 federal government programs now in place are fair  
14 and flexible and meet the constitutional standard  
15 described by Justice O'Connor. And the President  
16 and I will continue to oppose at every step of  
17 the way any wholesale ban on affirmative action  
18 in federal law.

19 I recognize that there are those who  
20 believe that affirmative action is unfair. They  
21 feel that they are being forced to pay for  
22 others' past sins and that affirmative action  
23 gives special preferences to minority groups and  
24 women. However, the fact that many minorities  
25 and women are still struggling at the bottom of

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1 the economic ladder suggests that this criticism  
2 misses the mark. Society's reality belies all  
3 the purported special treatment for minorities.  
4 Concerns about affirmative action must be  
5 addressed, but all too often these concerns are  
6 based on misperceptions about what the programs  
7 are all about. The abuses can and will be  
8 fixed. But when affirmative action is done  
9 right, there are no quotas, there are no  
10 preferences for the unqualified, and the programs  
11 end when the objectives have been achieved. When  
12 affirmative action is done right, it ensures  
13 equal opportunity. When affirmative action is  
14 done right, it corrects for the effects of both  
15 past and continuing discrimination. And when  
16 affirmative action is done right, it is an  
17 important tool in reaching our goal of an America  
18 coming together. Because of our efforts to  
19 eliminate discrimination and provide equal  
20 opportunity to all, our nation's workplaces are  
21 much more diverse than they ever were and our  
22 nation's economy is stronger for the effort.

23                   Of course, equal opportunity in the  
24                   economic sphere can only be achieved if our  
25                   citizens are prepared to take advantage of these

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1                   opportunities. In the next four years, the civil  
2                   rights agenda must also include ensuring that  
3                   educational institutions are equally accessible  
4                   to women and to minorities.

5                   As a nation, we have made great strides  
6                   in broadening opportunities in higher education.  
7                   Just since 1990, the numbers of Hispanics  
8                   enrolled in colleges and universities has  
9                   increased by thirty-five percent, Asian-Americans  
10                  by thirty-five percent; and since 1990,  
11                  African-Americans' enrollment in higher education  
12                  has increased by sixteen percent. The number of  
13                  minorities graduating from colleges and  
14                  universities is also rising, and that benefits  
15                  all America for that fuels the economy, provides  
16                  the people with skills who can run this engine  
17                  that fuels the economy that maintains this nation  
18                  as a great nation.

19                  Greater integration has meant a better  
20                  education for all of the students involved.  
21                  Education depends on dialogue, not just between  
22                  students and teacher, but between the student and  
23                  his or her classmates. For over twenty years,  
24                  our laws have recognized the important value of  
25                  diversity in education.

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1                   Last year, however, a federal appeals  
2                   court in Texas ruled that this is no longer good  
3                   law. This is the Hopwood case which ruled that  
4                   diversity did not justify affirmative action in  
5                   education. We disagree strongly with that  
6                   decision. The Supreme Court declined to take the  
7                   case on procedure grounds, so the issue is still  
8                   an open one. We continue to believe that if the  
9                   setting in which the students learn looks more  
10                  like the world, their education will be better  
11                  and stronger and prepare them better for the

12 future.

13 It may also be useful to ask, what do  
14 we mean when we say someone is qualified or more  
15 qualified for admission to college or to graduate  
16 school. We are making judgments about people  
17 before they have really had a chance to do  
18 anything. Education is the first rung on the  
19 ladder of opportunity. Getting an education is  
20 how you get ahead. And I just don't think it  
21 makes sense to deny that chance to someone based  
22 solely on a one size fits all test. You have to  
23 look, not just at test scores, but at what that  
24 individual will bring to that school and to that  
25 community and to this nation and you have to look

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1 at what the benefits of integration will bring to  
2 society as a whole.

3 Let me give you just one example of a  
4 broader view of merit and the benefits of  
5 diversity. A study of University of California  
6 Medical School graduates examined where doctors  
7 practiced after graduation. A much higher  
8 percentage of minority graduates than white  
9 graduates practiced in areas that were  
10 underserved by the medical profession. Because  
11 that medical school is diverse, California has  
12 better medical care.

13 Abraham Lincoln said that a house  
14 divided cannot stand and that a nation divided  
15 cannot stand. I believe so strongly that we  
16 cannot have a divided nation, one exposed to  
17 education and the other not. We have to do more  
18 so that every student has access to education.  
19 Because that young man who is the first in his  
20 family to go to college will likely become a  
21 father, and his son or daughter and this nation  
22 will be the beneficiaries.

23 We must also reemphasize quality in  
24 education as well as racial integration as goals  
25 of the post-Brown struggle. A place in an

28

1 integrated classroom is worth having only if it  
2 provides our children with a true opportunity to  
3 learn. We have to do more to address the  
4 inequality among the schools in our communities  
5 for it is unfortunately true that because of  
6 economic inequality, many predominantly minority  
7 schools tend to receive much inferior resources  
8 than those received by predominantly white  
9 schools. We need to find ways to develop and to  
10 finance city school systems that will keep  
11 families, both black and white, in the public  
12 school and give them an education that will help  
13 them meet the challenges of this next exciting  
14 century of the information age.

15 These are daunting challenges. But if  
16 forty years ago those children and their parents  
17 in Topeka, Kansas and in Little Rock, Arkansas  
18 and Clarendon County, South Carolina had the  
19 strength and the courage to face down an  
20 intractable establishment, hell bent on  
21 segregation, then I am not ready to say that  
22 today's challenges are beyond our grasp, and I  
23 don't think America is either.

24 Another crucial item on the agenda for  
25 the next four years is an effort to build a

29

1 greater sense of community and trust between law  
2 enforcement and the minority community. There is  
3 no other area where the potential for  
4 misunderstanding and miscommunication can have  
5 such dangerous consequences. Just in the past  
6 year, we have seen in St. Petersburg the danger  
7 of pent-up frustrations and a breakdown in  
8 community relations. And yet, at the same time,  
9 we must recognize that minorities are  
10 disproportionately victims of crime. Nothing is  
11 more important than a safe environment. The  
12 quality of the school a child attends will matter  
13 less if she is not safe in getting there or while  
14 she is at school. So it is an absolute  
15 imperative that we establish better trust,  
16 cooperation and communication between the

17 community and the police.

18 There are several ways we can set about  
19 doing that. First, through community policing,  
20 we bring law enforcement to the neighborhood  
21 level. We have police officers who are committed  
22 to serve the community, who reach out to the  
23 neighbors, who involve them in identifying the  
24 problems in the community and establishing  
25 priorities and in working together to achieve

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1 solutions. That police officer, rather than  
2 creating division, reaches out to build trust.  
3 He becomes the mentor. The elderly woman who  
4 would not walk out from behind her door because  
5 she is afraid now walks down to the community  
6 center to tell people what she thinks should be  
7 done, and we see communities coming together when  
8 community police reach out in thoughtfulness and  
9 respect and involve the people of this country in  
10 building security for us all.

11 Second we must continue to encourage  
12 diversity and understanding in all law  
13 enforcement. In years past, too many police  
14 departments had no black or Hispanic officers,  
15 few had women officers. Now we have not just men  
16 in blue, but women in blue. Not just whites, but  
17 people of all colors. People who patrol the  
18 neighborhoods they grew up in, people who know  
19 the languages spoken there, men and women our  
20 youth can look up to as role models. And these  
21 police officers are teaching each other how to  
22 value and to appreciate the diversity and the  
23 wonder of the tradition of the neighbors they  
24 serve.

25 Third, we must continue our vigorous

31

1 enforcement of civil rights laws. This must be  
2 combined with additional effective training  
3 efforts.

4 There are approximately six hundred  
5 ninety thousand law enforcement officers in this

6 country. The vast majority are honest, hard  
7 working and law abiding. They put their lives on  
8 the line every day for us in the pursuit of  
9 justice. Yet police chiefs and rank and file  
10 officers alike tell me to maintain the confidence  
11 in the community, we must take decisive action  
12 against those few officers who abuse their power  
13 and deny citizens their constitutional rights by  
14 use of excessive force or harassment. The  
15 Department of Justice plays a crucial role here  
16 through the use of civil rights prosecutions and  
17 criminal sanctions, and we will use our criminal  
18 and civil authority when the evidence and when  
19 the law justifies it and we will pursue each  
20 allegation. But at the same time we are working  
21 with law enforcement agencies in training  
22 programs that teach officers how to better serve  
23 their community, how to involve the community and  
24 how to make a difference.

25 So we have come a long way since Dr.

32

1 King reached into the soul of America, challenged  
2 its conscience and brought us together as never  
3 before. But at the same time, hate,  
4 discrimination and intolerance still raised their  
5 heads and efforts to divide us rise up.

6 We must today and every day rededicate  
7 ourselves to meeting Dr. King's challenge, his  
8 challenge to our conscience to seek freedom,  
9 liberty and justice for all, to come together as  
10 one nation while cherishing the racial and ethnic  
11 traditions and cultures that make this nation so  
12 wonderfully and so magnificently diverse. To  
13 some it is tempting in an uncertain and rapidly  
14 changing world in economy to turn inward to  
15 protect what they have and to let others fend for  
16 themselves. Others just throw up their hands and  
17 say I'm just one person, I can't make a  
18 difference. But Americans throughout this nation  
19 are making a difference as they reach out. Here  
20 in Birmingham this morning you can feel the  
21 excitement as people look on your city, a tiny

22 new city rising around the park. They took at  
23 their history and build on the history to make  
24 sure that what happened in 1963 will never happen  
25 again. They are coming together to give children

33

1 a future, to bring people out from behind closed  
2 doors, to involve America in the process of  
3 community and to provide the glue that brings us  
4 together.

5 In Dorchester, Massachusetts, I stand  
6 with religious leaders and young African-American  
7 students and white police officers as they have  
8 joined together to significantly reduce the  
9 incidence of youth violence in that community.

10 Now some of you may say but I'm too  
11 old, I can't make a difference. Remember the  
12 eighty-four-year-old man who once stood up in a  
13 meeting and said do you know how old I am and  
14 what I do three mornings a week? I'm eighty-four  
15 and I volunteer as a teacher's aide. And the  
16 young woman next to him stood up and said I'm the  
17 first grade teacher for whom he volunteers. And  
18 the children with learning disability can't wait  
19 for their time with him because he has the  
20 patience of Job and those who are gifted can't  
21 wait for their time with him because he  
22 challenges them far beyond what I can with the  
23 number in my class.

24 Come with me to dispute resolution  
25 programs in Washington, D. C. public schools

34

1 where white and black students are learning to  
2 live together where they're working together to  
3 resolve the disputes without knives and guns and  
4 fists. Come with me across this country and you  
5 will see so much of America coming together and  
6 reaching out and making a difference in making  
7 this a more peaceful nation that is together.  
8 Take part and take hope.

9 But remember the children of  
10 Birmingham, remember those four girls, and let us

11 focus for this next time on the children of  
12 America, the right to a mortgage, the right to  
13 equal opportunity for a home. Equal opportunity  
14 for an education won't mean very much if that  
15 young person does not live to seize that  
16 opportunity. Let us come together as one nation  
17 to say that we will stop youth violence in this  
18 nation. We will stop youth killing. We will  
19 work together to give them their foundation in  
20 which they can grow as strong, constructive human  
21 beings. This nation is coming together to do  
22 that.

23 You can hear Dr. King telling us we're  
24 not moving fast enough. Let us walk out of here  
25 today and think of what each one of us can do to

35

1 make a difference in the lives of all Americans  
2 and in the name of the children who walked out  
3 the door of this church or the children who died  
4 here, let us give all American children a future  
5 of peace, of liberty, of freedom, and of justice  
6 for all.

7  
8 END OF SPEECH  
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STATE OF ALABAMA)  
JEFFERSON COUNTY)

I, Eleanor S. Pickett, the officer  
before whom the foregoing speech was taken, do  
hereby certify that the foregoing speech was  
taken by me to the best of my ability and  
thereafter reduced to typewriting under my  
direction.

Notary Public in and for  
the State of Alabama

My commission expires: April 1997