



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

SPEECH BY THE HONORABLE JANET RENO

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

2 MS. RENO: Thank you, Dean. It is
3 a particular privilege to be here at Temple
4 today. For as I have told the Dean, in my
5 experience as a Prosecutor in Miami, some of
6 my best recruits came from Temple Law School.

7 Then for an hour this morning, I

8 met with the finest young students that I
9 have talked to in a long time. As I heard
10 them engage in a dialogue on race and on the
11 issues of race, their wisdom, their respect,
12 their humor, their thoughtfulness, were just
13 extraordinary, and as I told them, they were
14 an example for the country.

15 They talked about the importance of
16 educating people about race. But just as
17 important, about learning how to interact
18 with each other and building on that education.

19 They talked about how we must not
20 think just in terms of black and white, but
21 of the whole, wide world, and they talked
22 with rare eloquence about the need for

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1 respect.

2 They reminded me all over again
3 that young people have a wisdom and have a
4 candor that all of us in Washington should

5 follow.

6 It is also a particular pleasure to
7 be here at Temple, today, because you have
8 set an example for the Nation in terms of
9 creating diversity. We know how important it
10 is to have a diverse community to avoid the
11 dangers of racial isolation. In education,
12 diversity adds to the experience of learning
13 and it provides a diverse talent pool that
14 enriches all walks of American life.

15 In the workplace, it contributes to
16 our economic strength and to business's
17 bottom line.

18 In law enforcement, diversity has
19 enabled our Nation's police departments to
20 better relate to and earn the trust of the
21 communities they are protecting. In our
22 councils of government, minority

1 representatives have brought great talent,

2 new voices, and new perspectives to the
3 table, and have improved the responsiveness
4 of government to all communities.

5 Here at Temple, you set the
6 example, where almost 30 percent of the
7 students are minorities. This is a campus
8 that seeks to unite, to educate all students
9 from all backgrounds and from all walks of
10 life and judging by the 30 representatives
11 that I met with, you have done a superb job
12 of that.

13 America's universities and colleges
14 have been, and they must continue to be,
15 places where people come together, where
16 students can learn from each other, and in an
17 atmosphere committed to education and to
18 tolerance.

19 As a Nation, we have made great
20 strides in broadening opportunities in higher
21 education. Since 1990, the number of
22 Hispanics enrolled in colleges and

1 universities has increased by 35 percent.

2 Asian-American enrollment has shown a

3 similar 35 percent increase.

4 Since 1990, African American

5 enrollment in higher education has increased

6 by 16 percent. The number of minorities

7 graduating from colleges and universities

8 across this Nation is also on the rise, and

9 this Nation is stronger and better for the

10 presence of the graduates from all of

11 our communities.

12 Diversity in a law school class

13 has meant a better education for all the

14 students involved, for education depends on

15 dialogue. To the professors listening, there

16 was some interesting commentary about the

17 wonderful dialogue that can get started in a

18 classroom at Temple.

19 There are some professors that let

20 it go and know that it will go to the
21 ultimate discussion of truth. There are
22 others that cut it off, a little bit

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1 prematurely, and you can learn something from
2 your students because they treasure that
3 dialogue that has been generated in the
4 classroom of ideas, here at Temple.

5 It was exciting to hear just how
6 professors can contribute to that dialogue
7 and to improving it.

8 Exposure to different perspectives
9 is both enlightening and stimulating. To
10 listen to a young woman who came from an
11 all-white community, to Temple for the first
12 time, and all that she learned. Some
13 difficult, painful lessons, but she is
14 becoming a stronger person for the experience
15 at Temple.

16 It encourages students to ask

17 questions and to challenge themselves and to
18 challenge others. Students have developed,
19 from what I have seen, a mutual respect.
20 They have learned to communicate across
21 cultural barriers, and they have learned to
22 negotiate their differences.

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1 I continue to believe that if the
2 setting in which students learn looks more
3 like the world in which they live, their
4 education will be stronger and better for it,
5 and they will be better prepared to
6 contribute to the whole world in which they
7 live and make it a stronger, better world and
8 a stronger and better community.

9 Minority students who are given the
10 opportunity to show what they can do, will do
11 well at school. They will graduate. They
12 will pass the bar. They will pass their
13 Boards. They will become lawyers,

14 prosecutors and judges. Because I have
15 watched it happen and I have watched the
16 beneficiaries of affirmative action
17 contribute so mightily to their communities,
18 after they have had the chance at affirmative
19 action.

20 They have helped, as they have come
21 into the communities, bring a strength, an
22 understanding and a credibility. They have

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1 brought remarkable resources where they go to
2 live because they come as mentors, they come
3 as role models and they come as advocates for
4 those who previously never, ever had a voice
5 and who never believed that their dreams
6 could come true.

7 They now look at people who have
8 graduated, who have come back to their
9 communities, and they say, I can do that,
10 because somebody has forged a track before

11 them. I can make my dreams come true.

12 Then, the one who serves not just
13 as the role model, but as the advocate and
14 the mentor, can make it come true, even more
15 so.

16 I am concerned, however, that
17 future classes may not be able to benefit
18 from such a rich mixture of students that you
19 have had. In California, in the wake of
20 Proposition 209 and the debate on affirmative
21 action, there has been a drastic reduction in
22 the number of minority graduate and

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1 undergraduate students at some of the State's
2 leading schools.

3 The University of California at
4 Berkeley and The University of California at

5 Los Angeles recently disclosed the racial and
6 ethnic makeup of their incoming classes.
7 Berkeley reported a 57 percent drop in the
8 number of accepted black applicants, and a 40
9 percent decline in the number of Hispanic
10 high school seniors who had been accepted for
11 admission.

12 At UCLA, the decline was 43 percent
13 for African-American students and 33 percent
14 for Hispanic Americans. This cannot be our
15 future.

16 Abraham Lincoln said that a house
17 divided cannot stand and that a Nation
18 divided cannot stand. We can't have a

19 divided Nation, part given access to the
20 finest educational opportunities and part
21 denied that access.

22 If we are going to learn to live

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1 together as one society, appreciating the
2 magnificent differences amongst us, we must
3 ensure that all Americans share in the
4 educational opportunities that have been such
5 a critical, important part of the American
6 dream. If Americans are going to advance
7 together in a competitive world, we cannot
8 exclude from our institutions of higher

9 learning those who have so very much to offer
10 our Nation.

11 Like most of you and like most
12 Americans, President Clinton and I are
13 committed to the goal of achieving diversity,
14 including racial diversity, in our
15 institutions of public education. We support
16 the efforts of so many educators and colleges
17 and universities throughout the United States
18 who are well aware and who champion the
19 benefits to their students and their schools,
20 that flow from including in their student
21 body all of America.

22 We must ensure that our educational

1 institutions admit their students based on
2 the kind of persons they are and the kind of
3 contribution they can make, and not by test
4 and numbers that may not measure the true
5 potential of the person who is applying.

6 The importance of educating the
7 Nation about the facts of race in this
8 country cannot be overstated. But still,
9 there are those who condemn affirmative
10 action.

11 I say to them, Pause for a moment,

12 and consider how you got to where you are.
13 You may have been the beneficiary of the best
14 public school in the county. You may have
15 had tutors in math. You may have had lunch
16 with your Senator when you and your Dad
17 visited Washington when you were 16. You may
18 have gone to Europe on a high school
19 graduation gift.

20 Yet, I have talked to students in a
21 housing project in Atlanta, who dreamed of
22 going to Washington, and told me their dream

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1 could never come true.

2 Or there may be the case of a
3 prominent doctor, who was a good friend of
4 your family's. He wrote a letter describing
5 what an extraordinarily capable and fine
6 young person you were and you got into
7 medical school, despite a mediocre grade
8 point average.

9 Too many children don't have the
10 doctors who will write the letter; don't even
11 have the doctors that provide preventative
12 medical care.

13 We are the beneficiaries, almost
14 all of us, of some affirmative action or
15 another. Actions that give each of us the

16 opportunity to be what we dreamed to be.

17 When I was 13, people told me that
18 ladies didn't become lawyers. Other people
19 encouraged me and told me that it was
20 possible.

21 A Dean at Harvard Law School
22 determined to admit women and I was one of 15

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1 in an entering class of 544. When I
2 graduated from law school, one law firm
3 wouldn't give me a job. But 14 years later,
4 somebody engaged in some affirmative action

5 and gave me an opportunity.

6 All of us, one way or another, are
7 the beneficiaries of actions that help unlock
8 the potential of each one of us and give us
9 an opportunity to be what we can be, under
10 all the circumstances.

11 But, I suggest to you that we
12 cannot wait for affirmative action in law
13 school; we cannot wait for affirmative action
14 in the university. We have got to make sure
15 that our children, from the beginning, are
16 the beneficiaries of affirmative action.

17 That our children have the health
18 care they need to become strong and positive

19 human beings. That they have the educare and
20 the supervision in the early childhood years
21 that give the foundation for learning. That
22 they have education, no matter where they

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1 live in their community, that prepares them
2 for the university and for the law school and
3 for the medical school.

4 That they have supervision
5 afternoons and in the evenings, that give
6 them a chance to grow in a strong and
7 positive way with good adult guidance.

8 As the students pointed out to me

9 in the session we had this morning, educate
10 all of us about race. Every single one of
11 us, including an Attorney General, have
12 something to learn about race, and we can
13 start in the schools.

14 Understanding that it is not just
15 black and white that are at issue. That it
16 is a group of people from all over the world,
17 that have so much to teach each one of us.

18 Let us think about educating our
19 teachers about race and how to teach students
20 about race.

21 Let us create opportunities in our

22 schools where people can interact with each

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1 other, so that they can learn from each other

2 and let us learn to be candid and respectful.

3 Rather than saying that we are

4 color blind, let us start asking, Where did

5 you come from? Tell me about it? Let me

6 know about your traditions, and learn.

7 The schools can be a vital place

8 upon which we can gain the education that is

9 the foundation but also provide the

10 interaction which is so critical. But there

11 are communities where one young person says,

12 I was the only African-American in the whole
13 community. How do we learn? What do we do?

14 We have such challenges, but to
15 make this Nation what it can be, to unlock
16 the opportunity for all, we must figure how
17 we can bridge the gap and provide the
18 interaction and provide the understanding.

19 There are not many times when we
20 have the opportunity to improve upon the work
21 of our Founding Fathers. But in trying to
22 bridge the gap between the American ideals of

1 justice, freedom, and equality, and the
2 harsher reality of our daily lives, we do
3 have a chance, in these days to come, to make
4 ours a truly more perfect Union.

5 America's history on race includes
6 some of our most shameful and most violent
7 moments. But this country's epic civil
8 rights struggle and our efforts to redeem the
9 promise of our creed, in our efforts, we have
10 also witnessed some of the most heroic and
11 most uplifting moments.

12 In the last 40 years, our national
13 journey has taken us from segregated to
14 integrated classrooms; from Jim Crow laws to

15 civil rights laws for women, minorities, and
16 persons with disabilities; from literacy
17 tests for voting to the largest contingent
18 minorities in Congress. But 40 years after
19 Little Rock and Brown v. Board of Education,
20 discrimination and the corrosive effects of
21 racial prejudice are still with us.

22 To hear some of the students this

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1 morning talking about the horrifying, private
2 racism that they have experienced is
3 something that is important for us all to
4 hear. To know that it has not vanished.

5 We cannot say that we have
6 completed our journey, when even today racial
7 and ethnic minorities, and many women, still
8 have a harder time getting a job, winning an
9 apartment, getting a loan, or getting into
10 college.

11 We have not completed our journey,
12 when the unemployment rate for African-
13 American males is still twice as high as it
14 is for white males.

15 We are faced with the paradox of
16 having come so far in eliminating blatant
17 bigotry in our laws and customs, only to be

18 confronted with less definable, and often
19 unconscious prejudices and stereotypes, which
20 in some ways can be more intractable.

21 The issues of race today are no
22 longer as stark as a whites only water

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1 fountain, but they are no less real, and
2 perhaps, they are more critical today. They
3 are not always easy to talk about, but I have
4 just seen 30 young people talk with rare
5 eloquence about it, and I have come away a
6 better person for it.

7 Frank talk about race threatens

8 fragile sensitivities and political
9 correctness, and the issues are often hard to
10 resolve. Hard, but not unsolvable.

11 We have much to do, for too often
12 we live in our insular worlds with each of us
13 enforcing our own voluntary racial
14 separation. We pass each other on the
15 streets or in the shopping mall, but we don't
16 connect as individuals.

17 We work together or we go to school
18 together, and we don't connect as
19 individuals. We don't take the time between
20 classes to talk.

21 This week of campus dialogue gives
22 you a great opportunity. Take this chance to

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1 reach out across racial differences and
2 learn. Take the small steps that are needed,
3 in our efforts to rebuild a sense of
4 community where diversity is valued and
5 intolerance is totally unacceptable.

6 Some people have criticized the
7 President's race initiative as a good deal of
8 talk and not enough action. Anybody that
9 heard the session this morning would say
10 those people are wrong.

11 We should not underestimate the
12 power of dialogue. A great deal can be
13 accomplished by sitting down, face-to-face,
14 and hashing out our ideas, our feelings, and
15 our differences in a setting of mutual
16 respect.

17 Fortunately, I see a change
18 underway, a change that you are a part of.
19 This country is changing the way it resolves
20 conflicts, the way it resolves disputes.

21 Lawyers, police officers, teachers
22 and students are learning skills by which

1 they resolve disputes in ways that they have
2 not known before. Lawyers, law students in
3 this law school, are becoming problem solvers
4 and peacemakers, as opposed to just being
5 litigators or advocates.

6 The lawyer as a problem solver and
7 a peacemaker can be a force for such
8 tremendous good.

9 I came to the Department of Justice
10 and there was no organized, as I call it,
11 appropriate dispute resolution program. But
12 we are engaged in an effort to train every
13 lawyer in the Department in how to resolve

14 conflicts in appropriate ways and in the best
15 interests of their client and the Nation. It
16 is fascinating to see how a lawyer acquires
17 that skill, but it is more than just
18 resolving conflicts. Lawyers must assume new
19 roles.

20 I always got frustrated, as a
21 prosecutor. My prosecutors would come
22 upstairs, they would be victorious. They

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1 would feel they had really made the day,
2 gotten the conviction, sent an armed robber
3 to prison for 10 years. He had a drug

4 problem.

5 He was going to be out in three
6 years, because there were not enough prison
7 cells for a 10-year sentence, and there was
8 probably going to be nothing done to address
9 his drug problem. I didn't feel that we had
10 won.

11 Or the public defender would feel
12 victorious when he got his client off on a
13 Motion to Dismiss, and yet, as he turned and
14 watched him walk out of the courtroom, an
15 addict without treatment, he knew he was
16 walking into a greater prison than the prison
17 that he had saved him from.

18 Lawyers, whether they be
19 prosecutors or public defenders, trial
20 lawyers, or a transactional lawyer, have a
21 role to play in their communities as problem
22 solvers and peacemakers. One of the most

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1 extraordinary experiences that I have had was
2 at another law school, at a listening
3 conference, with Native-Americans from the
4 northeastern part of the United States.

5 One stood up and said to me,
6 pointing at me, You are just interested in
7 putting blame on somebody or clearing them,

8 or determining that they are guilty or
9 innocent. Why don't you learn from us, learn
10 from our Sentencing Circles, learn from us
11 about what is necessary to find out what
12 caused the problem in the first place, and
13 solve it?

14 I have never forgotten that. They
15 said, What can you learn from us about being
16 the peacemaker, as opposed to the advocate
17 who is always stirring things up?

18 Now, I know full well that you
19 can't be a good peacemaker, and you can't be
20 a good dispute resolver unless you are ready
21 to go to trial and ready to take that case to

22 court.

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1 So lawyers will have two hats, in
2 many instances, the peacemaker and the
3 advocate, but we have got to learn how to
4 provide that balance. We have got to look at
5 the issues that face the community.

6 How are we going to raise the
7 children in America today who do not have any
8 hope that their dream will come true? Who do
9 not have appropriate childcare? Who do not
10 have preventative medical care? Who do not

11 have anybody supervising them in the

12 afternoons and in the evenings, at 7 and 8

13 years old?

14 How are we all, in this room, and

15 all who are listening going to address that

16 problem in America?

17 Lawyers are setting about it.

18 Lawyers are reaching out to doctors. But we

19 have got to make sure that there is no child

20 in America that is left behind in terms of

21 giving them equal opportunity, not in law

22 school, not just at the university, but for

1 their life, and equal opportunity to grow in
2 a strong and a positive way.

3 I have a dream, and it has been
4 enhanced this morning by listening to the
5 students. That every teacher in our schools
6 today, in K through 12, learn how to resolve
7 conflicts in thoughtful ways.

8 That every teacher has the
9 capacity, learned in undergraduate school, to
10 teach children how to resolve conflicts
11 without knives and guns and fists. That
12 teaches children how to listen to each other;
13 how to communicate with each other; how to do
14 so by tone of voice, by body language, by

15 manner.

16 That teaches our children how to
17 solve problems together, rather than to get
18 into fights because they can.

19 How to develop respect between
20 races and people of different backgrounds.
21 How to talk with each other, so we understand
22 the beauties of race, as opposed to the

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1 horrors of race.

2 Finally, I have a dream that every
3 police officer, going to basic law
4 enforcement academies across this Nation,

5 will be taught how to resolve conflicts. Not
6 with a billy club, but with voice. Not with
7 a gun, but with manner. Knowing that at some
8 point, there may have to be a gun or a billy
9 club.

10 But knowing that we can reweave the
11 fabric of community around all races, if the
12 police officer who is on the cutting edge of
13 so much in the community, is the healer and
14 the peacemaker and the problem solver, as
15 well as the enforcer.

16 One of the more wonderful
17 experiences I have had is to talk with three

18 young men, in South Boston, who had come to
19 tell the President of the United States, how
20 important community policing was to those
21 young men. They stood and told the President
22 how they had almost gotten into trouble, but

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1 these two fellows had pulled them back, and
2 had made a difference in their lives.

3 Each of us can make a difference,
4 if we learn how, as well as our other roles,
5 to be the peacemaker and the problem solver.

6 This has been an extraordinary
7 morning for me. I take back to Washington

8 the wisdom of young people.

9 That is another thing we must do.

10 In whatever forum we seek to solve the
11 problems of our communities and our Nation,
12 we must involve young people in that effort.

13 Yesterday, we held a Symposium on
14 Alcohol Abuse and Crime. We had four young
15 people from the National Youth Network. One
16 of them became one of the spokesmen for the
17 group. They had the wisdom that these young
18 people had today.

19 When I go to a community, I talk to
20 young people and ask them what could be done
21 to prevent youth violence and youth crime,

22 and they talk to me, again with the wisdom of

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1 youth. Saying something to do in the
2 afternoons; some adult who knows how hard it
3 is to grow up in America; some adult who
4 gives me a pat on the back when I deserve it,
5 and can give me a figurative kick in the
6 pants when I deserve that, as well. But
7 somebody who never puts me down, but always
8 is encouraging me.

9 If we have somebody like that, who
10 can bridge the gaps that racism has created,
11 and bring people together so that they can

12 appreciate their differences, we can come a
13 long way.

14 I speak to the students, now. Some
15 people ask about public service, and they
16 say, I don't want to get into it. If you
17 listen to what is going on in Washington,
18 why, with all that rhetoric, do people get
19 into public service?

20 I have been there a little over
21 five years, now. It has been one of the most
22 wonderful opportunities to serve that anybody

1 could have. It has been one of the most
2 wonderful opportunities to use the law to try
3 to help other people.

4 I urge the students to consider
5 public service, at least for a part of your
6 life. There is nothing more rewarding.
7 Sometimes, you get called before a
8 congressional committee, and you get
9 figuratively beat around the head. You sit
10 there and think: Is this what Hamilton and
11 Madison and Monroe had in mind?

12 Then, you realize that it is. That
13 democracy is not the most efficient form of
14 government, but it won't work without people

15 willing to try to make it work.

16 As you deal with all the issues
17 that will confront us in this next century,
18 consider public service. Consider how you
19 can reach out and help others, to heal the
20 horrifying effects of racism, and to bring us
21 to a new appreciation of the magnificent
22 diversity of this Nation, the magnificent

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1 strength of this Nation, and the wonderful
2 opportunities it provides for so many.

3 Thank you for a wonderful,
4 wonderful day at Temple.

5 (Whereupon, the PROCEEDINGS were
6 adjourned.)

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