



RADCLIFFE COLLEGE

ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

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The 1998 Radcliffe College Alumnae

Association keynote address by the Honorable

Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United

States, taken at Radcliffe College, 10 Garden

Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138, at 1:45

p.m., on Friday, June 5, 1998, and the

proceedings being taken down by Martin Mulrey, a

Professional Court Reporter and Notary Public,

and transcribed under his direction.

P R O C E E D I N G S

ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO: Thank
you so very much. You do me a very great honor,
and you give me much, much to live up to. But
you have done so much for me. You've given me a
wonderful Deputy Attorney General, Jamie
Garrelli, who I served with great delight
and pleasure. And Renee, it's so good to see
you. Radcliffe has sent to public service, sent
to the professions, sent to this country some
wonderful, wonderful people, and it is a great

institution, and I am very touched to be honored as you have today.

We have a moment of opportunity in this nation. We can make a long-range difference for our future. We have that opportunity. Or we can become complacent and conclude, "Janet, crime is down, we don't need to worry anymore," and go home. I suggest if we do the latter, we're going to see a surge in crime again as the number of juveniles increases significantly in this nation. We will see a wage gap widen as more and more people have fewer skills to match the needs of the 21st century. And we will see unease and dissention

and division.

What do we need to do to grasp this moment of opportunity? Let us learn from these past years, and let us conclude that we must make not a one-time investment, but a lifetime investment in people. Let us conclude that we have been too long in investing in technology, too long in investing in buildings and in land without having the investment in people.

As a prosecutor in Miami, I would pick up the pre-sentence investigation of a

sixteen-year-old, whom we had just prosecuted for armed robbery. I could see four points along the way in that child's life where we could have intervened and made a difference, to avoid him from dropping out, to giving him something to do in the afternoons and evenings, some supervision.

And then the crack epidemic hit in Miami in 1985, and the doctors took me to the public hospital to try to figure out what to do about crack-involved infants and their mothers. And they taught me that the first three years of life were the most formative of all. That is when the person learned the concept of reward and punishment and developed a conscience.

And I thought, what good are all the prevention programs going to be worth ten years from now if we do not have a foundation today? What good are all the jails going to be eighteen years from now if the child doesn't have a conscience or understand what punishment means?

And I became convinced that whatever our concern, we must begin the investment now, because if we do not invest from the beginning, early on, we will never have the schools available that can teach our children for the future. They will all be providing remedial

education to try to bring the child up to today.

If we don't invest in our children and in people now, our medical institutions will be brought to their knees by a failure to provide preventative medical care.

How do we do it? We're not going to do it unless we collaborate, unless we realize that the doctor can't solve the problem by herself, the attorney general by herself, the teacher by himself. President Wilson I challenge you. I was recently at the Kennedy School, and they said, "Well, we're becoming more specialized." The academic world

can help lead us away from the specialization
that avoids collaboration, the specialization
that leads us down into one little path.

We do not raise a child with a
specialty. We do not raise a nation with a
specialty. We need to collaborate. We need to
make sure that as we build to create self-
sufficient people, that we build in a
comprehensive way. It makes no sense to have a
wonderful Head Start program and then have a
child at risk afternoons and in the evenings and
summertimes when there is no one there to

supervise them from the first grade to the
twelfth grade. It requires that we build brick-
by-brick.

Another wonderful opportunity exists
for us, and that is to learn again, that
research, study, analysis and evaluation can be
wonderful tools to those who are trying to
create the answers to social problems. And we
cannot forget that in this great institution and
in this great center of learning. Too often I
see something come across my desk, looks like
wonderful statistics, but it's five years old.
What's that got to do with now? I need current

information. I need the best analysis. I need to find out what's working and what doesn't work. I need to find out how you can adjust the program to make it work. And that's happening now. Let us base our decisions, our public policy decisions on the most informed information that we can achieve.

Let us determine that this is not a Republican or a Democratic issue. It is an issue that is based on common sense. It is an issue that is based not on rhetoric, but just on steady building, block-by-block, based on the sound information that we develop.

Let us create partnerships. I never liked it when the Feds came to town telling me what to do. I always wanted them to come to town saying, "You understand your community better than we do. What can we do to help you?"

And finally, if you want to engage in a wonderful opportunity, don't be discouraged.

Anybody that has tried to participate in rebuilding a community and investing in others knows the frustration, that there's sometimes four steps forward and five steps back, as a child disappoints you, as a person fails you.

What are the building blocks? Let's start one-by-one. First we must make sure that we understand and that we do something about the fact that the best caregiver of all is a strong, sound family. And let us understand how we can teach parenting skills to those who have not had the opportunity to have it handed down from one generation to another.

Let us make sure that we support our children and that we, together, in every community in this nation, develop child support enforcement mechanisms that are efficient and effective at collecting child support. This is

not a problem of the poor. This is a problem that reaches across all socioeconomic classes in this country, and we ought to use our smarts, our technology and our legal processes to make that work.

Let us focus on the fact that the child who watches his father beat his mother comes to accept violence as a way of life. And if we're going to make an investment in people in this country, we have got to do something about domestic violence, and the moment is now.

My friends, we can change a culture

in this nation. Congress has authorized billions of dollars in the Violence Against Women Act. It goes directly to states, for which they plan the distribution of the money in an orderly way, for shelters, for courts, for other initiatives aimed at domestic violence. Get involved. There is an advisory committee in almost every community. There are groups that are focused on this issue. The money is there. There are budget surpluses in most state legislatures now.

If we work hard for the next five years with doctors and lawyers working together, understanding that it's a criminal justice and a

public health problem together, if schools and employers work together, focusing on the identification of domestic violence problems, we can change the culture of this nation so that our grandchildren will look back and say, "They did what?"

But here is our greatest challenge:

If we are going to raise children, we have got to figure out -- and we ought to be able to do it -- how we can be the lawyer, the doctor, the teacher and raise our children the right way. I

remember my afternoons after school and in the

evening. My mother worked in the home. She taught us how to play baseball, to make cakes, to appreciate Beethoven's symphonies. She punished us, and she loved us with all of her heart, and there is no child care in the world that will ever be a substitute for what that woman was in our life.

If we can send a man to the moon, we ought to figure out how to have organized flex time and work schedules that permit both parents to spend quality time with their children.

One suggestion: Why don't we have two shifts, one shift ending as school gets out

so that one parent can go pick up the children
after school, and the other shift starting about
three hours later so you avoid rush-hour traffic
at night? It makes sense. Let's try it.

The next building block is health.

Something has been wrong with a nation that says
to a person seventy years of age, you can have
an operation that extends your life expectancy
by three years, but for too many children for
too long we said, you can't get preventative
medical care because your parent earns too much

they don't have insurance.

We have got to make sure that every child in America has proper preventative medical care, and if we don't care about children, some do, it comes out of our pocketbooks if we wait to pay for the costly tertiary care three years down the line. Let us use common sense as we build these blocks that put the lives of America together.

Let us focus on the wonderful, wonderful things that have happened in the treatment of mental health. And it's been such a revolution. There are so many wonderful things that can be done, and yet you see some of

these children do such tragic and tortured and
horrible acts. You see the stories talking
about the danger signals that were there, and
you see the children who didn't get the help
that could unlock that terror that caused those
tragedies.

Let us make sure that we understand
the tremendous strength and the wonderful
resource in the children of America who suffer
from disabilities and again realize what the
Americans with Disabilities Act has done to open
doors all across America. We can double the

opening of those doors if we make an investment up front in children and give them the tools to do the job.

Let us understand about housing. The child can't grow, we can't make the investment if the toilet from the ceiling above is falling into the kitchen below. Let us organize our efforts in a sensible way.

And I will give you one example of what I've talked about. I came to Jackson, Mississippi on Martin Luther King's birthday to work in Habitat for Humanity. I thought I was going to one habitat house. I did. But it was

in the middle of a neighborhood that was being renovated and rebuilt by people who cared, by neighbors who were going to be neighbors, by high school students. The before and after of that neighborhood was extraordinary. Each one of us can be part of a building block. Mrs. Winters, the wife of the former governor of Mississippi, was there ready to work. Every one of us can participate.

The key to everything that we talked

about is something that this great institution reflects. We're not going to have the building

blocks unless we focus on education. And let's start with zero to three. Let's not call it child care, let's call it educare. If 50% of all learned human response is learned in the first year of life, then let's make that investment up front with quality educare for every one of our children. Let us make sure that we expand Head Start so that its benefits are felt for every child throughout this land.

Let us focus on K through 12 and start doing something about a nation that pays its football players in the six-digit figures and pays its teachers what we pay them.

Let us keep our children in school.

We've had truant officers and truant officers,
but that doesn't do the job. You've got to have
the truant officer working with the youth
counselor, working with the public health nurse,
making a home visit to find out why that child
was truant in the first place. But let us
figure out how we keep our children in school so
that they can graduate with a skill that can
enable them to earn a living wage.

And let us start thinking of after
school. I learned an awful lot after school,
because I had proper supervision. I learned

some mistakes, too. We have got to start using that school building as a center for after-school, summertime learning. How many of you have gone to city commissions advocating for a youth center because the school wouldn't open its doors after 4:00 in the afternoon? Let us develop a system where these buildings are used, if necessary, well into the night, to make sure that we all have the opportunity to learn throughout our life and that our children are properly supervised.

If we have those children after school, the question will be, how do we afford

it? That's the old question, oh, it's going to cost money. The new answer is, there are people who are wonderful mentors. Mentors can make a difference if they're properly trained, if they know how to talk to children, how to raise them up instead of putting them down.

One of the great joys of my life was to watch an eighty-three-year-old man stand up and say, "You know what I do three mornings a week for three hours each morning? I volunteer as a teacher's aide in the first grade."

Teacher stood up next to him and she said, "The

gifted kids can't wait for their time with him and the kids with learning disabilities think he has the patience of Jobe." Every single one of us can contribute to these building blocks, no matter what our age, no matter what we do, if we care about investing in people.

We've got to make two focused efforts in terms of education. First we've got to realize that unless we invest in developing technical skills for our young people today, we are not going to have the workforce to fill the jobs to maintain this nation as a first-grade nation in the cyber age, and we've got to start now. We cannot wait to retrain. We have got to

begin now.

The second great challenge we have in our public schools, in all our schools is to teach people how to resolve conflicts without knives and guns and fists, teach lawyers how to resolve conflicts without going to expensive trials that cost more than they are worth, teach police officers how to arrest somebody without a billy club and resolve the dispute and get the kid off on the right foot.

Roger Fisher taught me civil

He never once, I think, mentioned negotiation.

But Roger Fisher has shown, along with many of his colleagues, that you can teach people to negotiate. Children are learning, teachers are learning and police officers are learning.

Let us imagine a society very soon to come that to get a teaching certificate, you have course work in conflict resolution, that to finish basic law enforcement academies for police officers, you get training in conflict resolution and that every child has conflict resolution programmed from the beginning of their time in school. We can change the culture

of America.

And that leads to the issue of safety. Crime is down for six years in a row. Somebody said to me, "Congratulations." I said, "I don't take the credit for it." They said, "Just figure like you've won the lottery." So I'll take credit for that.

There are so many pieces to a safe community. Community policing is obviously making a difference, because we are investing in people and in bringing people to the table to

priorities are and how they can work with police to solve those problems. Police in Dorchester and Roxbury have become the mentors for young people and are making such a significant difference. It is happening. It is happening because people like Don Stern are associating with people from Harvard to figure out what are the crime problems in Boston today and looking at the hard data, looking at the research, working with Commissioner Evans and working with so many other people in this community in collaboration. We have seen a significant reduction in juvenile homicides, again proof that if people come together in good will, you

can make a difference.

We can do it if we focus again on the community, on the concept of community justice.

Not in some remote court, but a court that's there, dealing with people's problems. But none of it's going to make any difference unless we change the culture of this nation about guns.

I'm not saying -- with President Clinton's leadership, we've banned assault weapons, we've passed the Brady Act.

But we have got to let people know

our young people know there is a consequence of firing a gun, that it is a real thing, and we have got to encourage the young people of America to understand that we don't play with guns when we're little, we don't play with guns when we're big if we don't know how to safely and lawfully use them. We have got to change the attitude of this nation towards guns. It doesn't mean that we stop using them for good recreational purposes. It means that we know how to safely and lawfully use them and demonstrate that ability.

The next way we can change the

culture of America is to focus on drug
treatment. There is something wrong with a
nation that says to somebody who runs up Storow
Drive going sixty miles an hour after having
five drinks and kills two people and breaks his
arm that he gets his arm set at the Mass.

General tonight at the taxpayers' expense even

if he can't afford it, whereas the person crying
out for drug treatment too often can't get it
because it's not available.

We have shown in these last fifteen
years that drug treatment can work. I bet

there's not a person in this room who doesn't know somebody who is recovering or who is in -- but everyone knows somebody who has benefitted from treatment. We have got to make sure that treatment is available on a cost-effective basis so that we prevent the problem before the abuse occurs, before the crime occurs, before we see a cycle repeat itself again and again.

But somebody said that the best caregiver is the family, but the best social service is a good job. There are too many people who do not have the skills to find a job that can pay a living wage. The gap between those who have and have not has increased

dramatically in this nation, with more falling
into both categories and the middle class
sometimes vanishing.

We have got to develop the capacity
within our educational system to train people
for the future, to give them the skills that can

form the foundation of retraining down the line,
that can give them the skills to fill the jobs,
that can give them the work ethic to understand
that you get to work on time, that this is how
you follow directions, this is how you save
money. These are all parts of the building

blocks. And we have got to take some of the great work being done in this educational area and find out how we organize the market forces where there are a large number of young people to fill the jobs, to provide jobs to give these people opportunity.

I have been Attorney General for a little over five years. I came to Washington believing with all my heart and soul in this nation. I felt so proud that I would have the opportunity to try to use the law to help people.

After a little over five years,

somebody says, "Well, are you disillusioned?"

And I turn and say no way. Never, ever, after this time, have I believed so profoundly in the future of this nation, so profoundly in its people, so profoundly in the children of this nation.

My friends, children are some of the toughest little critters you ever saw. If they're given half a chance, they're going to succeed. Let's give them a real chance so they really succeed. It's happening across America. Join with me in doing this. Thank you.

RCAA PRESIDENT JANE TEWKSBURY: My

sincerest thanks to Attorney General Reno.

Those were truly inspiring remarks.

(Whereupon the proceedings were

concluded at 2:10 p.m.)

