



MIRIAM LEE TROPP MEMORIAL LECTURE

JANET RENO, SPEAKER

DATE: NOVEMBER 9, 2000

TIME: 7:30 P.M.

PLACE: WHEATON COLLEGE SCIENCE THEATER

HINDELL AUDITORIUM

NORTON, MASSACHUSETTS

(COMMENCED AT 7:35 P.M.)

MS. RENO: I promised her a long time ago that I'd get here, and I did. But thank you for your patience. And to you juniors and seniors and sophomores, when talking to a freshman, remember to do what your president did for me. She was a year older, and she made me believe that I could be somebody. My graduation weekend I sat next to her mother, and her mother, more importantly, had become a lawyer, had become a distinguished trustee, and she truly made me believe it. Each one of you can reach out and touch somebody and make a difference. I asked some of your classmates tonight what I should talk about, and they said, "Yourself." And I said, "Nah." I will talk just briefly about a subject that I really cannot talk about. One of the joys of the job has been to welcome ministers of justice from emerging democracies in eastern Europe or in South America. The law is becoming and the criminal justice system is becoming more international in its origins and its results, and it is imperative that we reach out around the world, but as these people come to talk about democracy, they come with stars in their eyes, but with such limitations and such frustrations. They come back sometimes out of office or their democracy somewhat marred. You realize in talking to them how fragile democracy is. You realize that we must never, ever take it for granted. And the strength of our democracy this evening is an example of Americans who have not taken it for granted, who

gave their lives on battlefields, who stood for unpopular causes in the legislative and Congressional halls, who have served this country with distinction. Just remember that each one of you can make a difference. The one thing I would ask you, if you're idealistic, don't lose your idealism. If you aren't, get it, because you really can by your actions make this a better world, and if you can't make it a better world, you can keep it from getting a lot worse.

You have no idea what it's like after you've been a prosecutor and to have a man stop you on an elevator and say, "I want to thank you for arresting me." I said, "Sir, I never arrested you." "I know. I know, but you handled my case. Your prosecutors handled my case. I had lost my family. I had lost my job, because I had hit rock bottom because of drug abuse. Your office got me into treatment. I've got my family back. I've had my job back for a year. Thank you."

Solving the problems for people who could not solve them themselves is so important. You can draft great laws and utter great consequences and concepts, but it is people that count, and you can change the world just by changing one person's life. To have somebody stop you and say, "I want to go into public service because of you," makes you feel good, too. And then if they start mimicking you as to how you sound and what you do, if they write a rap song about your collection of child support, and they say, "Janet Reno came to town, collecting all the money."

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: So there are so many rewards. How did I get here? I learned a valuable lesson from a lady who is my best friend, my mother. We lived in a little wooden house when I was eight years old, and my father didn't have enough money to build a bigger house. Mother announced one afternoon she was going to build a house, and we said, "What do you know about building a house?" She said, "I'm going to learn." She went to the brick mason, the electrician, the plumber, and she learned how to build a house. She came home, and with her own hands dug this foundation with a pick and

shovel. My father would help her with the heavy work at night. She put in the wiring, the plumbing. I like plumbers better than electricians, because the electricians wouldn't give her a permit, because she was a woman. The plumbers let her do it on her own. My father would help her with the heavy work, and that house stood there, and she and I lived there until she died, just before I came to Washington.

That house was a symbol to me that you can do anything you really want to, if it's the right thing to do and if you put your mind to it. But on August the 24th, 1992, that house, at about 3:00 in the morning, found itself in the middle of Andrew. My mother woke up, frail, dying, but totally unafraid, for she knew how she had built that house. The winds howled in the most unearthly noise I've ever heard. Trees crashed around the house, but she sat there holding her hands, for she knew she had put in the right materials. She built it the right way. She did not cut corners. That morning we went out. The world looked like a World War I battlefield, but the house had lost only one shingle and some screens. Build your life the right way.

Don't forget to laugh at yourself, and if you can't laugh at yourself, find a brother or two that can. It's very important that you don't take yourself too seriously. Whatever you do, cherish your family. I don't know what I would have done in these last seven and a half years if I hadn't had family to call and just talk to them about my feelings. They are your most precious possession. If you're going to have children, demand of your workplace that they provide you with the time to be with your children, both parents. If we can send a person to the Moon, we ought to be able to organize the work places of America to give parents quality time with their children. Time to nurture, time to bond, time to read them books, time to play baseball with them, time to teach them how to bake cakes and to appreciate Beethoven symphonies, and hopefully they won't be like my mother who was prejudiced against Dickens.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. RENO: In 1984 I suddenly found myself the guardian of

15-year old twins, a boy and girl, and the girl was in love. I've learned an awful lot about raising children in the last years. It takes hard work, intelligence, love, and an awful lot of luck, and you will find nothing more rewarding than to find somebody throwing their arms around your neck as you put them on a plane to send them to college, then when you go to see them graduate cum laude in three years, and on each occasion they say, "Thank you. I couldn't have done it without you." Or when you take care of your mother and take her around the world when she's old and frail and dying. Make sure those last years are special and wonderful. Don't forget the people you love. And don't forget your democracy.

As we deal with these issues tonight, we are strong because of the people of this nation. And my first advice to you would be trust the people. The people of this country are extraordinary. They can be opinionated, fractionated, fussy. Their representatives can cuss at you, fuss at you, and figuratively beat you around the ears. But there is no job more rewarding than serving the people of this country. There is no job more rewarding than public service. What are the challenges? There has been no -- nothing that I could ever have dreamed of in law school that could mean what the opportunity to use the law the right way has meant in terms of meeting the challenges of making America safer, freer, healthier, and giving people a more positive life in this country, all the people. But we have much to do, and we need more people focused on what is right.

Now, Harry Truman said, "What is right is easy to figure out" -- or "Doing it is easy to figure out. What it is is much more difficult." But that's the fun of it. I'd just like to share with you some of the principles that I've tried to use both as State Attorney in Miami and as Attorney General. First of all, the problems of America get solved in communities and neighborhoods and not just in Washington. Communities understand their needs and resources far better than we do in Washington. They know their people, their strengths, their weaknesses. They know how they can bring people together. Washington should be a great partner, not telling them what to do, but providing them technical assistance and information that can help

make their community a better place.

Listen to the people of your community. Listen to those people that holler at you and fuss at you. They've got a lot to say. If you listen long enough, suddenly the voices calm down, and they find that somebody cares and is willing to listen, and the shouts turn into dialogue, and the dialogue turns into some of the best conversation you could ever have.

Start early if we are to really use the law to make America safer. I learned long ago that zero to three was the most formative time of a person's life, the time when a person develops a conscience, an understanding of rewards and punishments. 50 percent of all learned human response is learned in the first year of life. I suddenly, as I learned that, said to myself, "What good are all the prisons going to be 15 and 20 years from now if we don't invest in children in zero to three?" These are all the children of America. "What good are all the school programs and educational opportunities going to be 15 years from now if we don't form a foundation in these first three years?"

How to do it. Parenting. We can be better parents. We can learn to read to our children. We can take the time. At her memorial service, I said of my mother, I started the eulogy by saying, "Winkin', Blinkin' and Nod one night sailed off in a wooden shoe, sailed off in a wooden shoe." It was just as if she was speaking to me. Your children will remember that.

Give them a safe home. This nation is plagued by domestic violence. We try to solve the problems in the courts, but that's not the place to solve them. The place to solve it is teaching people how to avoid conflict with knives and guns and fists and you can start in those first three years. The way we solve it is for criminal justice personnel and public health personnel and the emergency room physicians and the obstetricians and the pediatricians and the family physicians to come together and say, "We're not going to tolerate this anymore. We're going to provide shelters. We're going to make a difference. We are going to teach people from the get-go that you don't have to

tolerate somebody beating on you. It's not acceptable in this world. And there are better ways to do things and to resolve conflict." And we begin to see domestic violence rates going down in this country. Each of us can make a difference.

Let us make child support as easy to collect as taxes. It's more important to some people. On a Sunday night, "Ms. Reno, you haven't gotten me my child support. I'm about to get thrown out on my ear because I can't pay my rent. It's all your fault." Then she'd start to cry. Then she'd start to holler at me again. Then the next morning, she'd get her check and call me and apologize. And then she would see me at a ceremony dedicating a new church to replace a church burnt down by arson, burst through a rope line in front of the President of the United States, give me a big hug, and say, "Janet, I haven't seen you since Miami. I got run out by Hurricane Andrew, but you got me child support for these guys."

(MS. RENO LOOKS UP)

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: Each one of you can make a difference. Let us make sure we provide health care. Something is wrong with a nation that is as prosperous as it is, but still is not providing all the children of America with prenatal care and preventative care that is cost-effective and makes sense.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. RENO: To have you clap, what the appropriators will tell you is, "We don't have enough money." It's going to save money if you invest a dollar in prenatal care. It will save you three dollars in intensive care down the line. Let us start our arguments so that people understand. If not for common humanity, for cost effectiveness, for a healthier, better, safer community, we should make those investments.

But then there is Edu-care. We've got Head Start back a lot earlier, but there's still those first years, those formative years. Let's not call it child care anymore. Let's call it Edu-care. Let's make sure that Edu-care is available to every child in America as K through 12 is, because it is far more important. Let us make sure that we reach out and develop comprehensive programs.

People say, "Janet, you talk about prevention, but these programs don't work." Too often they don't work because there is a piece here, a piece here, a doctor does something here, a court does something here. There is a piece missing from six to twelve. The child is unsupervised during that afternoon, and they get into trouble. People say, "All the programs fail." Let us develop comprehensive programs that provide for the child's needs as a whole. Let us make sure that we focus on cross disciplinary efforts. Lawyers are not going to solve the problem by themselves. Police officers are not going to solve the problems of crime by themselves. University professors are not going to solve the problem of crime by themselves, but university professors providing statistics, providing a good, thorough academic evaluation of programs, of analyzing the community's needs, of telling people what can be done in terms of priorities, can be one of the most instrumental groups of people around, and I have enough university professors in my memory that not only did that but spurred me on. So professors, go to it. You've already given me the opportunity to talk with some of the brightest, best, most motivated students I have met with, and so I have no doubts that you can do it.

Develop policing in the same way. Use information. We are in an information world that people still don't know how to use it. They talk about the development of databases. They get the data, but then they don't know what it means. Let us make sure that we not only understand cybertechnology so that we master it rather than it mastering us, but that we understand the information that it develops.

Let's take Boston. Analyze it, develop the database, understand what part of the crime is related to domestic violence, what part drug organizations. Apportion the --

prioritize your police resources to go with it, bring the community in, bring the faith community in, focus on domestic violence as well. You can make a tremendous difference if you use your data the right way. If you realize that crime, for example, is not a Republican or a Democratic problem. It is everybody's problem, and that these solutions should be found in common sense and hard facts that inform the actions of us all.

Use science and research. Can you imagine what it would be like if we developed sensible solutions to substance and alcohol abuse? The savings we would have in lives lost, lives ruined, families put into chaos, neighborhoods destroyed, and prisons built. Just the return on the investment. If we can send people to the Moon, we can unlock the problem of alcohol and substance abuse and make a difference.

What are the ultimate answers? The ultimate answers still go back to us slowing down a little bit, smelling the roses, solving the problems, reaching out without conflict. And that takes time, and people don't have time if they're lawyers with billable hours. You all haven't gotten to law school yet, and you haven't gotten to the big firm yet where you put down the .1 hour or the point .15 hour for the telephone call that you really didn't have to make, but it was just an abundance of caution that required that you do it. Lawyers should be solving problems. Doctors should be solving problems. People in the business of serving others should be solving problems, not worried about the money that they get.

One of the joys of my life was to come to Washington, to be greeted by my classmates and others from the surrounding area who had gone to school with me. They were envious, and I had been envious of them going to great Washington law firms. They were envious that I had the opportunity of public service, at problem solving. Use it. Use time. Use your loved ones. They make all the difference.

I told Dale that what I wanted to do was answer questions. I tried to get you to start asking me some questions, so I'm prepared for some of them, but I'd really like to try

to answer any I can. With respect to the pending matter, just remember, I really shouldn't discuss much of it, but it is a time when this nation must come together and solve its problems together without uncivility. I think we can do it. Having worked in this government, I think it will be possible, and I think we will be proud of ourselves.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: I'll try to call on people, so if you raise your hand, I'll keep track of who's got questions. Who wants to start? It's always the hardest.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm a sophomore here. I've always felt that I'd love to be a singing diplomat, and people always laugh at that, but I feel that music and art have a lot of power in being able to make people come together and solve the problems of the world, and I was wondering what your views would be on that.

MS. RENO: I do agree with you totally. If I could sing, I would.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: I would have a wonderful time. The people who can play the guitar and sit around a campfire do more to bring people together than anybody I know. Music can break the ice and soften the tones that sometimes put people off. A sense of humor can do the same thing. A sense of humor combined with a mean guitar can make all the difference. Poetry can make such a difference. Poetry can reach deep into your heart just as music can and cut at it, it hurts so much sometimes, and then just by getting to the truth through both music and poetry, you come to a higher level, both in terms of entertainment, in terms of humor, in terms of soothing tenseness, in terms of coming to the truth. The arts are some of the most wonderful, wonderful attributes of man and women that I know.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. I wonder if you would say something about your experiences as a woman in what I imagine to be a

pretty male dominated area.

MS. RENO: It's not been male dominated. The deputy attorney general was at one time a woman. The assistant attorney general for environment and natural resources was a woman, for the criminal division was a woman, for the office of policy development for tax. For one more thing, I think. Donna Shalala, Madeline, Carol Browner, and others and I have had a good time.

The last problem I had was when I was named State Attorney in 1978, and about four people said to me, "You're a nice lady, but I just don't think a woman can do the job." About five months later one of those people, an anchorman for a local television station said to me, "I've got to admit that I was wrong," and I've never had any comment ever since. Some people suggest that I get a rough time and get some knocks, some of the figurative knocks, because I'm a woman. I don't think so.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. My name is Alexis Davis. I'm a freshman, and I was just wondering, I always thought of police officers -- I'm from New York City -- as people who are going to keep me safe, and I had an incident where I was handcuffed and harassed by a police officer for something he thought I did and I didn't do, and he didn't even apologize to me, and then I did some research and found out that that happens to a lot of kids my age or younger for riding the subways with student Metro cards, and I was just wondering, how are we going to show kids that violence can be treated peacefully if police officers are using violence to treat violence?

MS. RENO: That is a wonderful question. I think police officers have the hardest job of anybody I know. I think they have to make hard legal decisions in very difficult situations in which their lives are exposed to danger along with others. They have to protect others as well as themselves. They do it without going to law school. They do it without sitting at a desk with their feet propped up, pulling books off the library shelf to write a brief to tell them what the answer is to what the police officer has to decide in five seconds.

I have seen a vast sea change in policing as more and more police officers recognize that serving the public in a thoughtful way is by far and away the most effective, the most correct, the right thing to do. My conclusion is that most police officers in America today are excellent. There are some few who are not, and I cannot imagine anything more horrible than somebody coming and saying, "You're coming with me," for a crime you did not commit.

The police officer has a special responsibility, because they probably, more so than any other single institution, represent government to its people. And how they treat people makes all the difference. The tone of voice. Suppose you have a taillight out. "Give me your license. It's expired. Don't you know to get a license? What's wrong? Can't you say anything?"

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: "Excuse me, ma'am. Your left taillight is out, and it's dangerous. I'm going to give you a warning. Please do go get it fixed. Ma'am, your license is a day expired. Would you please go get it renewed tomorrow and let me know that you have? I'd really appreciate it. Here's my telephone number."

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: Where it is the most vital is with young men ages about 14 to 30, who so want to contribute, but one quarter of African-American men in the ages of 18 to about 50 have been in some form of custody. We have got to stop that, and we have got to give them the chance to get off on the right foot if they have been in custody. There are about four hundred to five hundred thousand people that will return from prison each year. How a police officer talks to them is very important.

I participated in a rehab program at a building in St. Louis on Martin Luther King's Day. I walked in and the television cameras followed me, and half the young men were

trying to stay out of prison by volunteering and half had just come back from prison or something like that. They looked at me like, "Oh, no. Here comes a showboater. As soon as the television camera leaves, she will probably." So they didn't find me anything to do. Television cameras left. I stayed. They said, "You want something to do?" I said, "Yes. That's why I came." So I proceeded to nail three-penny nails into studs, and I didn't bend any. They decided I might be okay, and we started talking. What they wanted most was to have their voting rights restored when they had done their time.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. RENO: What they wanted next was police officers not to put them down and think that because they were -- they had been to jail that they were the likely candidates for the person who had committed the burglary down the street. Police officers do a wonderful job for the most part, but we've got to learn that an apology can make a difference. They're worried they're going to get sued if they apologize. We've got to come back to civility on everybody's side. It is one of the most difficult issues, but I think if we train our police officers in how we carry, such as, "Good evening, ma'am. How are you?" How we apologize and say, "Ma'am, I'm sorry. I didn't know" -- I don't know what the circumstances were, but whatever, "I apologize to you." "Sir, this is why I've stopped you. I'm giving you a written statement of why I stopped you so that you can understand, because I want to be accountable to the people I serve. I want them to understand."

I made an admission tonight. I'm 62 years old, so it's a daydream, but when I leave this job, I'd love to be a police officer for one hour. A police officer in the British tradition where I wouldn't carry a weapon and where I'd try to talk and act my way out of any real difficult situation and try to work together with the community to solve problems.

Now, my details would say I'm not being idealistic, I'm just being foolish. But think about the English tradition of the bobby who didn't carry the gun and who talked his

way out of problems. We can do an awful lot, and I think your question was one of the best I've had in a long time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We recently gave the Columbian government over a billion dollars to fight the so-called war on drugs. In your opinion, how successful has this campaign been and are we going about it in the right way?

MS. RENO: It has not really started yet. I spent about two days in Columbia. It's now -- March, a year ago. It's a beautiful country. It has so much to offer. It has so many difficulties. My hope is that some of the money will go for alternative development, but we have got to provide true alternatives that give people decent opportunities, and I look forward to trying to work on those issues. At the same time we have made some significant strides in extradition of nationals in terms of those true major traffickers that are destroying lives and neighborhoods in this country through their drug trafficking, and I have a great admiration for the government of Columbia and what it's been able to do, but we've got to come to the heart of the problem which is to give the people chances at an alternative economy that is legal, that is productive, and that can give that nation a future, because if you've never been there, it is an incredibly beautiful country. Three branches of the Andes come up through the country. One along the Pacific, one up the middle ridge, and then one up the side by the jungle. At the end as you climb north from Bogota, a tremendous peak suddenly comes up by itself, Christopher Columbus Peak. It is snow covered in March, and it rises right out of the Caribbean. We never see those pictures now because nobody wants to go to Columbia, but it is a nation that I hope has a future. It deserves it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. My name is Jared Rose. I'm a senior. I'm currently working on a paper for my civil rights course on hate crimes. I was wondering what your opinion on hate crimes are and how our society and our generation can combat them, such things as anti-Semitism, homophobia, racism, sexism.

MS. RENO: First of all, we need to get the hate crimes legislation passed.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. RENO: But the second thing is to speak out against hatred. I spent a year in Germany when I was thirteen with an uncle who was with the Allied High Commission Forces. I asked how Dachau and Hitler could have occurred, and they said, "We just stood by. We didn't do anything." Cowards, haters are cowards, and when confronted, most of the time, they back down. We cannot stand silently by. We must do everything we can to appreciate each other and the remarkable diversity of this nation. Today I spoke to the President at the dedication of the Japanese-American Memorial to Patriotism, to the men who gave their lives while their families were interned here in the United States simply because they were of Japanese ancestry, many of whom were civilian -- citizens or permanent residents lawfully in this country. They were taken to places in Wyoming and distant camps.

One of the most touching sights that I ever witnessed was Senator Alan Simpson, who can be very acerbic but had a marvelous sense of humor, and he is just a wonderful person, talking to now Secretary of Commerce Norman Mineta exchanging notes on what it was like to sleep in the same tent at a Cub Scout jamboree in the Wyoming wilds when Norm was in an internment camp and Alan Simpson was a kid in Wyoming. Those are the moments that you remember.

There is prejudice. I still hear prejudice when people say, "That so and so. Blah, blah, blah." This nation is a nation of so many different people. We've got to appreciate the culture of each and understand each. But one of the most poignant moments, and I will never -- they're tied together. I spoke at a Human Relations Commission dinner about a year and a half ago. Mr. and Mrs. James Bird and their son were there. The brother had been dragged to his death in Texas. Mr. and Mrs. Sheperd were there. Matthew, who had been killed in Wyoming. The Birds didn't want any part of a hate crime law unless it included sexual orientation. To see those couples so diverse and so united was so beautiful, and to see the warmth with which they

were greeted was just magnificent.

Next I sat in the Roosevelt room waiting for the President of the United States to come in, surrounded by law enforcement, as we talked about the need for hate crimes legislation. One of the people there was a crusty detective from Wyoming who had investigated the Matthew Sheperd case. He talked with me, then I said, "Tell the President." He said, "Matthew Sheperd's friends and his family changed my life. They taught me that I had thought wrong, that I had been wrong. I have changed my attitude. I have changed my feelings, because Matthew Sheperd's friends helped me understand, and I now am teaching my son something different." All of us can speak out, can talk to each other, can suffer sometimes the pain of talking with each other, but to get through the pain to reach the truth makes it worth it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. I'm Cara. I'm a senior. This summer I interned at the Alliance for Justice in DC, and we had organized the First Monday event, which is the campaign to --

MS. RENO: Can you speak just little bit louder?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I interned at the Alliance for Justice this summer, and the First Monday event to end gun violence at which you spoke, and you talked at length about the gun violence epidemic in the country. It was about a nationwide campaign to organize against gun violence, and we brought it to Wheaton, and I'm trying to get -- there is an activist group on campus, and I was wondering if you had any suggestions other than what they're offering, writing to your representatives and things like that.

MS. RENO: I can't tell you to write to your representatives. That's against the law for a cabinet member to do.

(LAUGHTER)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I was wondering if you had any other

suggestions to do to organize against gun violence in this country.

MS. RENO: I think one of the first things that people should do is to become -- who are interested in doing something about gun violence is to first understand that there are a lot of people that care passionately about the right to possess guns, what they think is the right to possess guns. There are a lot more people who care not so passionately about the regulation of guns. The more you can become informed as to what the Second Amendment really says according to the construction of the Constitution, the more you have the facts of the number of young people killed, of the tragedies that occur through guns, the more you can organize your communities and go door to door and care.

You can make a difference. It is hard, because there are so many competing priorities, whereas for most people who are on the other side of the gun issue, that is their only issue. But America has got to sit up and take note, because guns are killing far too many people even though crime is down now for eight years in a row.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. I'm a sophomore/junior here, and my question has to do also with hate crimes and the violence in the schools. I'm from Alaska, and I helped to found one of the first Gay Student Alliances in all of Alaska for high schools. We received phone threats. I received personal threats against my own safety, and I'm curious to know, how can people stand up and fight against something so terrible as hate crime when their own safety and the safety of others around them is threatened?

MS. RENO: It is one of the hardest things to do. Do you retreat? Do you stand up? Do you risk your life? The most important, I think, is to do is to figure out how you can be the most effective advocate while protecting yourself. That is easier said than done. I have FBI security now. I won't. But for 15 years as State Attorney in Dade County, I drove myself. I did not have security. I got some threats. And I made a judgment with myself -- and I don't offer this to you. You have to make this decision -- that I would rather risk things than be afraid to risk them. Each person

has to make their own judgment about what they're willing to risk, and it is so hard, for I have watched people that I love in the same situation.

Reach out to people. Identify people in the community who are supportive. Form a network of all the people that you can find. I hope you will figure out a way that you are comfortable with, because it was presumptuous of me to tell you or suggest to you, that you're comfortable with where you can be yourself and be proud and be safe.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Violence in American schools seems to be a growing trend, and I'm going to be a student teacher next year. I'll admit it. I'm a little afraid. What can present teachers and future teachers do to knock violence out of their schools?

MS. RENO: First of all, schools are far safer than people give them credit for. We've done now surveys to analyze this. If I can get your name and address, I'll send you some materials on school violence that I think you might find helpful. It is fascinating to see a teacher -- I used to go to public schools on the average of once a week, anywhere from about the fifth grade to seniors in high school. How tall are you?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Five feet even.

MS. RENO: There was a teacher who was four foot eleven, and somehow or another, by tone of voice and manner, the same way as a police officer can do it, and by the subject and her enthusiasm and her ability to teach, she had them in the palm of her hand. There were others that had absolute chaos and assistant principals with walkie-talkies everywhere. The magic of gaining control without it appearing to be control makes teaching one of the great arts that there is, and it is a magic, but it is magic that goes to very honest things. Of being yourself, of respecting them, of talking to them without putting them down, without demeaning them, of giving them the sense that they are somebody, and that they can be involved in their class. It's wonderful.

I remember my teachers. One could read Chaucer and make it just come alive. But then one day she returned papers to us and said, "Now, there are two people that have exempted the test or the test that was going to be an essay that follows. Ms. Reno, you and so and so do not have to write this essay. What did Blake mean by the tiger?" And I was so appalled that anybody would ask me, "What did Blake mean by the tiger?" That I just -- was disturbed. I never asked her about it. I graduated. And I saw her about ten years later. She was standing at her mother's hospital door, so I didn't -- was a little dubious about whether I should raise it, and finally I did. "I've got to ask you, why did you ever assign that to us? It was such a stupid question." She said, "My dear, I must have been drunk."

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: Pull yourself up to your full height. What are you going to teach?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Spanish.

MS. RENO: Teach Spanish with the same zest my Spanish teacher in high school did. Don't be as didactic and dogmatic as he was and you'll have a wonderful time.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I'm Matthew Allen. I teach ethno-musicology.

MS. RENO: What kind of musicology?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ethno-musicology.

MS. RENO: What is that?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: We have openings in the class next semester.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: You can help me with my steel pan.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I think we're all trying to respect your stated wish not to be questioned too closely about what's going on in the recount.

MS. RENO: I didn't say -- I just said what I wouldn't be able to answer.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: This, of course, is on our minds. I'm just wondering -- I'll just ask a particular question. You may not want to answer it, but is the issue of having, say, 19,000 double-punched ballots, is there something there where a legal recourse is possible?

MS. RENO: I really can't comment. These are all issues -- remember again that state law primarily governs the conduct of elections under our federal system, and we just need to work through all these issues with state officials and do it the right, thoughtful way.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: You might just add what you said at your press conference this morning since that's on the news about what role you expected to play.

MS. RENO: What we're doing in each instance is to look to see whether there's federal jurisdiction, recognizing that in most instances it is state jurisdiction. There are -- nothing like this has confronted us, and so it's something that again, this democracy can rise to, because it's dealt with other more complicated issues and it will deal with this. One of the frustrations I have is that I can't comment about so many pending matters, but in the end I'll be able to.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Lindsey, and I'm a junior here. This, too, kind of correlates with that a little bit. We have seen from the election in the past couple of days that people's vote does count in the United States, and I think this is true. It's a great thing for democracy what has come about, but do you think -- how will this impact future elections, not just presidential but Congressional, and trying to get more people out to vote and show them it does make a difference.

MS. RENO: I hope with all my heart it will, because one of most profound lessons I learned after I first got into public service was learning when a friend, not a close friend, but a friend of mine was in a race and lost the race by one vote. It really makes a difference. Winston Churchill said democracy was the most inefficient form of government, but he couldn't figure out one that was any better. I have had an opportunity to travel across this nation, to sit in lots and lots of Congressional hearings, to have a 9:30 press availability almost every Thursday morning since I came to Washington. I've seen so much of this country, and I can tell you that I am prouder today to be an American than ever before. I'm prouder of the American people. I have greater faith in them, and I wish that they would learn this lesson and go vote. I don't care who they vote for, just vote.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Daphne, and I am a political science/Hispanic studies major. I'm a senior, and this year I'm working as an English as a Second Language mentor at a middle school in Attleboro. I know your concerns for the well-being of children and education of children. I was curious to know if you had any suggestions about furthering or developing programs to work on skills with bilingual students. Hispanic studies is really, really important now, more so than ever, and I see these children that are not able to communicate, and I was wondering if you had also any opinions on merging in the classroom, because I can see that it has advantages and it also has drawbacks.

MS. RENO: My mother used to say, "Janet has a few well-chosen words and opinions on everything." And she used to caution me that I should be very careful. If I wasn't an educator, I shouldn't sound like an educator. I said, "Well, if I do it, I come by it honestly from you, because we've had millions of words on everything." I don't know, but if I can try to get your -- if I can get your name and address, I'll try to collect as much material as I can in Washington and send it to you.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: I saw more hands. Mark?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: My name is Mark DeSousa. I'm a sophomore. The question I have for Ms. Reno is that do you think that affirmative action is critical in the 21st century, and how do you think -- do you think it's critical for higher education?

MS. RENO: I think we are starting too late in higher education, but I think it's critical in higher education to make up for lack of a level playing field early on. And those who criticize higher -- affirmative action in higher education ignore the fact that I think almost all of us are beneficiaries of affirmative action. My father was a newspaper reporter who got me a job in the sheriff's office the summer I graduated from high school. My mother was a newspaper reporter who got me a job in the welfare department the second summer after I graduated from high school. I call that affirmative action. And I suspect that everybody in this room has somehow or another been the beneficiary of it in different ways.

There are some who didn't have mothers and fathers who could convey that benefit, that might just be able to convey love, which is an awful important affirmative action, because there are a lot of kids that don't have that, but my concern is, why wait until law school? Why not create the level playing field in appropriate prenatal care, appropriate Edu-care, appropriate health care, appropriate supervision after school and in the evening with equal elementary schools and the like? In other words, provide the affirmative action along the way, and for those people who don't have strong family structures, provide programs that will help them in high school prepare for college admission tests. But most of all, we all have something to offer.

One of the best examples of why affirmative action is important is we have a wonderful lawyer, an African-American trial lawyer. He was just magnificent. He is just magnificent. The white prosecutors didn't want blacks on the jury because they thought the blacks would acquit everybody. And this black prosecutor said, "You dummies. Don't you realize these people are being victimized far more than you? You just don't know how to choose the right

ones that will be fair. Let me work with you and show you." It changed just like that. We were getting more convictions. The process seemed fairer. Everybody was far more involved.

There is so much that we can do if we understand each other better, if we don't develop stereotypes, and why it is so important to have diversity in America is so that we can -- first of all, it's important because it's right. Secondly, it's important because it's respecting our common humanity. The third thing, if you can't convince people of that, a nation who's not operating on all cylinders at a hundred percent is not a strong nation. If we've got people who are disabled because they have been through the criminal justice system and they didn't have to go, or they weren't able to get into college, I bet if we tested them correctly, tested them to their skills, we might find a cybergenius there that we hadn't met and haven't exposed, because we've tested him on other things that don't relate to cybertechnology. We've just got to appreciate people for who and what they are, and there is tremendous, tremendous strength across this nation if we do that.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: Can I ask you a question? As you reflect on the Elian Gonzalez case, how would you assess your own judgments and other people's judgments? After all, even though we don't know the outcome in the election, at least the debates are over, so maybe you can reflect on that whole terrible, traumatic episode.

MS. RENO: Well, I didn't do things based on elections, so let's leave the elections out of it. I didn't do things based on whether I could come home again, so leave that out of it. I did what I did because a little boy belonged with his daddy.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. RENO: I had qualms as I saw those agents come out with him. First thing I saw on television was the picture of the gun. That's all I saw on television Saturday morning. 2:00 Saturday afternoon there was the picture that sits on my

desk of father and son, and it was worth it.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. Hello. My name is Neil Coy (phonetic). I'm a sophomore here. In February of 1996 Fidel Castro murdered four pilots, three of which were United States citizens who were part of the Brothers to the Rescue organization. This happened while they were flying their Cessnas trying to save rafters coming in from Cuba. You have repeatedly not indicted Fidel Castro. Why have you done so or why have you not done so?

MS. RENO: I cannot comment on that.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: Next?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I went to a rural high school in Maine. I just had a question about that. We didn't have enough funding to hire teachers that were (INAUDIBLE). We didn't have a job program or (INAUDIBLE) program. We had a 30 percent teen pregnancy rate. We graduated kids with fifth grade reading levels. How do you think the government should address public spending for education, and how are you going to assure that schools like mine don't fall through the cracks?

MS. RENO: How am I going to do -- what was the last question?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How do you think government should adjust public spending or federal spending for public education?

MS. RENO: And then you had one final point.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes. How can you prove or how can you assure that schools like mine aren't going to fall through the cracks?

MS. RENO: How did you get here?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: How did I get here? Perseverance, determination, scholarships.

(LAUGHTER)

MS. RENO: I think one of the great issues that we face in this country is how do we deal with issues of criminal justice issues, domestic violence issues, educational issues in rural America. In some instances you have opportunities because of a great principal, great teachers that just happen to come together, but one of the things that I've tried to do with my criminal justice monies in the Department of Justice is to make sure that we share it equally between rural America and less urban America and the big cities, because I think your point is very well taken.

I think we can do a lot more with long distance learning than we have. I will have to tell you that I don't think there can be -- my mother wouldn't let us watch television because she said it contributed to mind rot. We didn't have a television in the home except we rented one to watch the man land on the Moon. There is something alien to me about canned speech. There is nothing that substitutes for a human being standing in front of you explaining a geometric theory or reading you a poem or telling a story or instructing you how to write. There's no substitute for the real teacher, but if we can't develop enough teachers to get them to rural America, then let us figure out what we can do to improve cybertechnology and communications so that we get the next best thing to them in a forum that can be very instructive. Interactive video, other programs, things that inspire people.

But what it comes back down to is the teacher, and the teacher that learns to use the marvelous communication media that we have today can be a powerful force. I have a friend, a colleague, who is doing his -- getting his paramedic certification, and the whole thing is being done really through distance learning, and it's making a tremendous difference. I think we can do a lot more, but I think you've got to have people who care, and I think the greatest challenge is how do we encourage, in this time of very low unemployment, how do we encourage people to be teachers? Something is wrong with a nation that pays its football players in six digit figures and pays its school

teachers what we pay them.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. RENO: How many of you voted? But there were too many hands down. And there was too much applause for teachers' salaries. And we also see our teachers burdened down by reporting requirements and paperwork. Let us free our teachers and give them time to teach. Let us give them the tools they need to teach, the modern computer equipment, the books, the materials, and let us give them the opportunity, the real opportunity to prepare our children for tomorrow. That's what voting is about.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: We've got time for a couple more questions.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. I'm Kate Boley. I'm from Dade County. I actually used to work with you. I don't know if you remember Inspector Michael Boley?

MS. RENO: Oh my goodness, yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: He's my dad. That's not my question. In regard to Elian, I totally agree with you, and coming out of that community, I was the minority in agreeing with your decision, but I was just wondering, we have all forgotten Elian, but I bet you Elian hasn't forgotten about what we've done to him. Have you talked to the family or to him since this all happened? Do you know if he's adjusting back in Cuba? Is there any damage that may have happened between all this trauma?

MS. RENO: I don't know, and I have not talked to him. I thought it better not to interject and to let his father make his decisions as to how he should be raised. I hope with all my heart -- I'll be, let's see, 14 years from now I'll be about 76, a little old lady, and I hope I can meet Elian Gonzalez and his father and see what he has become, and I hope I will be very happy.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: Yes?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: I am resident of Massachusetts. I have gone through schools here. They have now passed a lot of (INAUDIBLE) tests. Do you think it's controversial to say that you have to pass a test to get a diploma? Isn't that discouraging to people in education especially in inner cities in like Lynn and Boston where they don't have economics to teach our kids like towns like Marblehead do?

MS. RENO: Well, that's one of the things I'd like to figure out, how we can level the playing field. Sometimes the testing can level the playing field. For example, you change police officers' or prospective police testing, and you get whole new skills identified in the testing instrument that give a wider range of tools for a police officer. Other times the test becomes the barrier. I think we should -- there is so much that we can do through science and research, and the more we can understand testing, its opportunities, and its limitations, the better we can do it.

It is difficult for a school with a large volume to try to look at each person individually. But it meant all the world to me that my teachers knew who I was, knew me well enough to say in the fifth grade, "Janet, please don't be so bossy anymore." I have never forgotten that. I was so mortified. I have tried always to remember that since. I think we can do a lot more with testing and make it less a barrier and more an opportunity.

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: Let's make this the final question, and then there'll be a reception afterward so people can still talk to Ms. Reno.

MS. RENO: Can I also call on that lady right there?

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: Let's do mine first and then hers.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. My name is Jessica, and I'm a sophomore here, and both of my parents are 7th grade teachers, and one of -- my stepfather teaches in Hartford in an inner city school and my mother teaches in suburbia, but they both seem to have the same sorts of problems. Not

the same problems exactly, but the same source of the problem. My stepfather came home with blood on his shirt from breaking up a fight, and my mother continually has more and more problem students in her class, you know, the students with the sheet of paper that explains, you know, their differences. And I think that the root of this problem is the lack of parenting, and I was just wondering, how are we as a nation supposed to pick up the slack for parents that are not doing their jobs?

MS. RENO: You, as the next generation, when you graduate from Wheaton and then when you graduate from any graduate school that you go to should ask your employer, "What are you doing about a family friendly workplace? And I don't mean just time to go to the kids' school. I want to raise my child the right way. What will you offer me?" Now, those that are going to a Wall Street firm making \$110,000 a year, you won't have a family friendly workplace in all probability. I think I'd sacrifice the \$110,000 a year for something less.

I have a dream. The extreme of the dream is to develop two shifts, a parents' shift and a golfers' shift. The parents' shift would begin at about 8:00 in the morning when both parents drop their child off at school and then together pick him up or her up at about 2:30 or 3:00 in the afternoon so that they could both spend quality time with that child, and there would be a hiatus so that both parents in those first formative years could be around them constantly, one or the other, alternating work schedules.

The golfers' shift would be from 11:00 to 7:00 or 8:00, and it would have an additional benefit. You wouldn't have rush hour traffic, and you wouldn't have to put your money into highways. You could put them into kids and schools and better schools and smaller classrooms. Now, somebody said, "Janet, would you please stop doing that? It marginalizes you." I haven't found anybody that thinks it's a bad idea.

(LAUGHTER)

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Hi. My name is Rachel Pierre. I'm an

international relations and French studies major. I just had a question since we are the (INAUDIBLE) and we are the leading country in this world, our ideology is based on democracy. There have been problems such as Kosovo and then wars in central Africa dealing with the civil issues between the people and ethnic groups. What are we doing? You know, the United Nations have attempted to carry out peacekeeping projects and so on, and they haven't been able to do that, because there's been a lack of financial support, particularly from the United States. In your opinion, what are -- what should we be doing about that?

MS. RENO: Well, I can't tell you what to do vis-a-vis Congress, but I think it is very important that we honor our commitment in the world forums and world assemblies such as the United Nations. My experience in these eight years has been -- as I started off this discussion, one of the wonderful parts has been to welcome ministers from emerging democracies. One of the great opportunities I've had is to go to South Africa twice, once for President Mbeki's inaugural, once to consult with and provide support for my colleagues in the criminal justice arena. It is so rewarding to have them come back to me now and tell us that we are making a difference.

The United States must go not as a big brother but as the respectful partner. The United States must go and say, "We'd like to share, but it's a two-way street." It's coming and going, but we can't do it just with one nation. We have got to try to establish the key point in a place like sub-Saharan Africa. Where else do we start? How do we build an institute for law enforcement training? What can we do? How can we be a good partner in giving people equal opportunities? It gets frustrating, because it's sometimes three steps forwards, four steps back, but when a man can sit in a kitchen in St. Petersburg, Russia and using his computer steal from a bank in New York through an electronic fraudulent transfer, we understand that the boundaries of the world will become in many instances meaningless as we try enforcing against cybercrimes, stalking, and other things that can be done through the Internet. This is a new world. It's an exciting world, but it's a world that needs everybody working together. It's

going to be a fascinating country. Hispanics are going to be the major minority. It's going to be an exciting, wonderful country, but we've got to work very, very hard to take advantage of the strength and the wisdom, the wonder, the humor, and the art that's there.

(APPLAUSE)

MS. ROGERS MARSHALL: Thank you for a very special evening. Let me remind that you we are one of the first to offer you a visiting professorship.

(CLOSED AT 8:47 P.M.)