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SPEECH BY ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO BEFORE
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE PREVENTION OF
CRIME IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Taken before AARON S. KAUFMAN, Notary Public,
State of Florida at Large, and Registered Merit
Reporter, commencing at 12:10 PM, and concluding at
12:40 PM, on FRIDAY, MAY 31, 1996, taken at 5780
Major Boulevard, Orlando, Florida.

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

2 MS. RENO: Thank you very much, Buddy, for
3 your leadership in this state, for your friendship
4 and for your wisdom that has guided me on a number
5 of occasions even if you think I was on the other
6 side.

7 And, General Butterworth, he was a police
8 legal advisor and I was an assistant state attorney
9 when we worked in the Florida Legislature trying to
10 revise the criminal code; and it gives you a sense
11 of what community is all about when you have worked

12 with somebody over that period of time, have dealt
13 with the hard issues. Bob Butterworth never
14 flinched from the hard issues, and the fact that
15 this conference has proven so successful over such a
16 period of time is just a great tribute to this man
17 who is an example for all public servants. I want
18 to applaud you.

19 The President has asked that I read a
20 letter from him for he considers this conference so
21 very important.

22 "Warm greetings to everyone gathered in
23 Orlando for the 11th National Conference On
24 Preventing Crime In The Black Community. While as a
25 nation we are making real progress in reducing

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1 crime, it is a tragic fact that African-American
2 communities bear a disproportionate share of the
3 burden of crime and violence and that too many young
4 African-Americans have gotten caught up in the
5 criminal justice system. These issues are of vital
6 concern to my administration and I am pleased that
7 Attorney General Reno is joining you to share some
8 solutions.

9 Our children should not have to pass
10 through metal detectors to go to school, or be
11 approached by drug dealers in public parks, or worry
12 that they can be victims of drive-by shootings.

13 I recently introduced a comprehensive
14 legislation that would help kids stay drug free,
15 keep them away from guns, and make the juvenile
16 justice system work tougher, smarter and more
17 compassionately.

18 My administration is working hard to give
19 American communities the tools they need to bring
20 down the crime rate. In 1994 we passed a sweeping
21 crime bill that among other things will put another
22 one hundred thousand police officers on the streets
23 of America over a five year period.

24 And these police officers are different.
25 They will be making a concerted effort at community

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1 policing. Walking a beat. Working with
2 communities. Reaching out to children. Not only
3 catching criminals but learning the neighborhood so
4 that they can stop crime from happening and give
5 young people something to say yes to in their
6 future.

7 But government alone does not have all the
8 answers. Each of us as individual citizens must
9 take responsibility for our children, our families
10 and our communities if we are to end the plague of
11 crime and violence in our nation today.

12 I commend all of you for devoting your
13 energy, your ideas, and enthusiasm to this crucial
14 endeavor. My administration is committed to
15 supporting you as you share ideas, develop
16 strategies and implement solutions. Working
17 together we can solve any problem and meet any
18 challenge as long as we each do our part.

19 Best wishes for an enjoyable and
20 productive conference. Bill Clinton."

21 I've only been here for about forty-five
22 minutes but I've already seen people who have
23 touched my life and touched the life of children in
24 their communities. I look out on the audience and I
25 see people that I know. And to all of you, those I

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1 know and I don't know, you and the work that you do
2 to prevent crime in your communities are but little
3 lower than the angels. You are the people that make
4 the difference, and from the bottom of my heart I
5 thank you for what you do day in and day out.

6 You are here because you understand the
7 problem of crime and what it does to your
8 communities. And I would like to go to the heart of
9 it, to talk about solutions and what we can do to
10 make a difference. I think there are some key

11 things to any solution that's going to work.

12 First of all, start early and build a
13 solid foundation in the people who are part of the
14 community. But never ever give up on any generation
15 and keep trying at every step along the way to bring
16 people into a chance where they can have a strong,
17 constructive, positive future.

18 Look at life as a whole. We tend to get
19 caught up in our small project that is doing so much
20 for one particular group of kids for one particular
21 period in their life, but we don't link with other
22 projects that encompass the child's life or the
23 person's life as a whole. Thus, a wonderful
24 preschool program may go for naught if they're not
25 active in the evening programs during school time

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1 that can continue to give that young person a chance
2 at a strong, constructive future.

3 Build community.

4 It is so exiting to see police officers
5 here along with prevention specialists, along with
6 drug specialists. It is so exciting to see the
7 private sector and the public sector come together.
8 Involve all of the citizens.

9 One of the things that struck me so much
10 about this conference is that you do the right
11 thing. You listen to children and young people.
12 They have so much to say and so much wisdom.

13 Value the diversity of all the community.

14 I now have a chance to travel across this
15 nation to see so many different people at work
16 together. The diversity of this nation is its
17 strength and its wonder and we have got to teach all
18 people to value it.

19 Involve everybody in the process. Too
20 many people think that government and community
21 efforts are remote and not a part of their life.
22 Make sure that we bring people out from behind those
23 closed doors, out from beyond the doorstep, out into
24 the community, to the schools, to the courts, to

25 participate as part of a government of the people,
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1 by the people and for the people.

2 Hold people accountable but do it firmly,
3 fairly and make sure that the sanction fits the
4 crime. But most of all, do it with respect. Every
5 human being deserves respect. Deserves to be
6 treated as if they are somebody. And you start
7 doing that, and they suddenly think they are
8 somebody and that they can make a difference.

9 This nation has gotten too shrill in the
10 way it talks to each other. We almost scream at
11 each other sometime, and if we're not screaming at
12 each other we're putting each other down. Let's
13 start looking at the best in people and pick out the
14 best in people.

15 All of life is a puzzle. Sometimes a very
16 complex puzzle. And figuring out how we can give people a future
17 free of crime is like putting together a very
18 complex puzzle. Sometimes there are pieces that we
19 lose. Sometimes we just can't fit it together.
20 Sometimes we don't see even the whole scene.

21 But if we can work together, if the
22 disciplines represented here, the different levels
23 of government represented here work together and
24 look at the community's life as a whole and people's
25 life as a whole, we can put that puzzle together so
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1 that we can see the picture of the communities we
2 cherish.

3 And how do you go about putting those
4 puzzles together?

5 As I said, you start early. But you start
6 early with strong and healthy parents who are old
7 enough, wise enough and capable enough to raise
8 children, the single hardest job there is to do.

9 We teach people an awful lot of things in

10 our schools but we can teach parenting skills as
11 well. We can make sure that there are afternoon
12 programs available to do the same. We can develop
13 programs to give people the opportunity to grow into
14 strong, constructive human beings before they
15 develop a family. And we can do it because of the
16 work that so many of you are doing across this
17 nation. We've got to share the ideas and see how to
18 work together.

19 One of the keys to this is to ensure that
20 this nation develops a child support enforcement
21 mechanism that makes it as difficult -- as easy to
22 collect child support as it is to collect income
23 tax.

24 What do you think -- somebody will say,
25 what does that have to do with crime prevention?

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1 Do you know what it's like to get a call
2 Sunday night at 7 o'clock at night from somebody who
3 hasn't gotten child support and doesn't know how
4 she's going to pay the rent and is going to end up
5 in a car with her children? That's going to
6 continue the crime down the road. Let's start early
7 and build a foundation.

8 Let's make sure that we bring our children
9 into families and homes of peace. Domestic violence
10 is one of the greatest contributors to crime in this
11 nation, not only for the people directly involved
12 but the children who observe it. Violence is
13 learned and the home is one of the best places to
14 learn it unless you turn it around.

15 Congress and the President working
16 together in a bipartisan effort passed a significant
17 violence against women act that will provide
18 significant dollars to states, around to every state
19 in this nation for creating innovative programs
20 focused on domestic violence.

21 I urge you to look to your state
22 coordinators to see what is available and what you
23 can do in creating programs of centers, of

24 specialists, of focusing on kids who observe the
25 violence and intervene with them in terms of
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1 conflict resolution programs that help explain and
2 resolve not just the violence between the parties
3 but the violence in the family as a whole.

4 Community police officers can make such a
5 difference. So many officers tell me that their
6 major call, their major complaint in their community
7 that they are serving as community police officers
8 is for a domestic violence call, some problem
9 there.

10 Let us teach our officers how to be
11 mediators as well. Let us improve community
12 mediation programs. We have to teach people to be
13 mediators.

14 Let's form an association in each
15 community between the bar association and
16 communities to develop community mediation programs
17 and let's teach lawyers how to resolve conflicts
18 peacefully, too, and not just try all the lawsuits.

19 A good problem solving lawyer contributing
20 his time or her time on a pro bono basis can make a
21 difference.

22 I was challenged at the Department of the
23 Justice as an aspirational goal to contribute fifty
24 hours of pro bono service; and I'm going to be
25 training in conflict resolution and in mediation and
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1 trying to work in communities in Washington where it
2 can make a difference.

3 Let us bring our children into a world
4 where they are healthy. What do you think that has
5 to do with crime prevention? I looked at enough
6 presentence investigations to see problems along the
7 way that were health generated that caused the
8 emotional reaction that caused the behavior that led

9 to the crime.

10 Let's give our children a safe and healthy
11 start making sure that every parent has prenatal
12 care, that all our children have preventative
13 medical care that can save us from crisis in the
14 future.

15 But you'll say, it costs so much money.
16 I've got a lot of doctors that are willing to
17 volunteer their time if we can work out the
18 liability issues and cut through the red tape and
19 solve the problems. Let's start doing it and be
20 creative and bold and bring people together to
21 address these problems.

22 Now many of you in this room will know one
23 of the big problems between getting people to health
24 care and them needing it and that is
25 transportation. Nobody ever focuses on

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1 transportation as part of the problem.

2 There's a doctor across town willing to
3 provide his services but it's two bus trips across
4 town. Let's develop centers where doctors can ride
5 circuit who are willing to volunteer and where they
6 can be convenient to the community.

7 Let us look at what we can do with
8 telemedicine and the doctor across town working with
9 the physician's assistant in the community to make a
10 difference. But let us use our technology, let us
11 use our boldness, let us use our creativity to make
12 a difference and ensure appropriate health care for
13 our children.

14 Something is wrong with a nation that says
15 to a seventy-year-old person, you can have an
16 operation that extends your life expectancy by three
17 years; and then we turn to the child of the working
18 poor who do not have enough money for health
19 insurance and don't have enough money for medical
20 care, sorry, we can't get the preventive medical
21 care.

22 If we built this nation to where we are we

23 can make sure our children and their families have
24 medical care.

25 And let us not forget about mental
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1 health. In my lifetime there have been such
2 extraordinary developments, such improvements in
3 mental health care. We've unlocked so many
4 mysteries of the human mind. We should make those
5 services available to all Americans, not just the
6 people who can afford the best psychiatrist and the
7 best psychologist. We should get community mental
8 health into every community in this nation to make a
9 difference.

10 And then, we've got to focus on the
11 problem of substance abuse.

12 Something is wrong when you look at the
13 waiting list for substance abuse treatment in this
14 country when you see a man have five stiff drinks,
15 drive down a highway, plow into two cars and kill
16 three people and break his two arms. His two arms
17 will be set tonight in some public hospital at the
18 taxpayers' expense. But here we have people
19 pleading for help, begging for treatment, and we
20 say, sorry, we've got a waiting list.

21 We've got to work with the medical
22 community to ensure that we learn how to deliver
23 drug treatment in a cost effective way to everyone
24 who needs it. It is one of the best preventative
25 steps we can take to preventing crime in the
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0014

1 future.

2 But everybody says, oh, look at the money
3 that's involved. Again, if we be creative, if we
4 think in terms of day centers and think in terms of
5 supervision, we can truly make a difference.

6 And don't let anybody ever tell us anymore
7 that drug treatment doesn't work. Everybody in this

8 room knows somebody who is recovering because of a
9 successful treatment.

10 We can do so much in education and
11 prevention. Just look at what the National Guard is
12 doing here and in other states around the nation.
13 Let's make sure that the National Guard is in every
14 state in the nation working together with the
15 community to define drug -- demand reduction in
16 programs that truly work. We can make such a
17 difference.

18 But one of the biggest problems is the
19 problem of what do you do about that pregnant lady
20 who's about to have a child and is suffering from
21 addiction. She doesn't want to come in because
22 she's afraid you're going to take her child; or if
23 she has that child, she won't seek treatment because
24 where she's afraid you're going to take it away from
25 her.

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1 We've got to develop programs where the
2 child can be with the mother in constructive
3 treatment settings that can make a difference.
4 We've got to ensure that we have aftercare programs
5 that can make a difference.

6 Five weeks of treatment isn't going to
7 help if you go back to the open air drug market
8 where you got into trouble in the first place
9 without support, without somebody there to help you
10 along the way.

11 There are wonderful programs, few and far
12 between but wonderful programs that are at work
13 now.

14 One of the most touching I saw was in a
15 prison in the state of New York. In each cell were
16 two bassinets and two beds. There was a wonderful
17 nursery. The children were thriving with some of
18 the best child development experts. There was an
19 aftercare program that reintegrated these women into
20 the community and these women told me, I've lost
21 some children on the outside because I could never

22 get it together and I didn't know how to parent.
23 I'm learning, I'm making a difference, and I'm going
24 to be able to do it better.

25 And I said, Is this just talk?

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1 And the people who ran the program said,
2 no. We've got a track record of those that are
3 returned to the community that show we can make a
4 difference, but we've got to look at the family as a
5 whole.

6 And while we're doing it, we cannot forget
7 alcohol. We look at the illicit substances but we
8 have got to focus on alcohol as a cause of violence
9 as much as anything and make sure that we take steps
10 with the medical community to learn best how to
11 handle it.

12 And the puzzle won't come together, the
13 puzzle won't work right unless we provide housing
14 that's not fancy but safe.

15 The lady who has tried to work out her
16 life but then the plumbing from upstairs starts
17 dripping into the kitchen below is just going to get
18 beaten down because she can't get that landlord to
19 fix it.

20 Let us work on providing decent housing
21 through community initiatives that can truly make a
22 difference.

23 But we do all that and we still bring our
24 children into a world of violence where people see
25 too -- see and hear too many gunshots, too many

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1 deaths, too many injuries.

2 We can make a difference in terms of
3 community safety through the community policing
4 program. It has now put seventeen thousand officers
5 on the streets of this nation and authorized funding
6 for over forty thousand. And by the end of six

7 years we'll put a hundred thousand community police
8 officers on the streets, community police officers
9 who are making a difference.

10 One of the sights I will never forget is
11 standing in the great hall of the Department of
12 Justice with the President of the United States, a
13 community police officer and three young men from
14 Worcester, Massachusetts, who came to tell the
15 President what a difference that officer had made in
16 their life. How he pulled them back from gangs, how
17 he had gotten them back to school, and how they were
18 going forward to make a difference because of him.

19 And I see it happening across this
20 nation. Police officers who know how to treat
21 people the right way. Who know when to be firm,
22 when to give them a pat on the back, and who knows
23 their community.

24 Let us focus on what we can do about
25 getting guns out of the community. If citizens and

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1 police work together and we focus on getting guns
2 out of the community the right way again with
3 respect, we are at the very act of crime
4 prevention.

5 But it's not just guns and drugs. Part of
6 building a community is building a quality of life.
7 That overgrown vacant lot, the abandoned cars, the
8 graffiti. Police officers in the community setting
9 working with the citizens in the neighborhood can
10 get rid of that, too, because those police officers
11 are problem solvers and they are teaching the
12 community how to do the same.

13 But yesterday Marlisa Cryer told you that
14 what was most important was education. That is a
15 significant piece of this puzzle and she was so very
16 right.

17 But we've got to begin education young.
18 Because as I tried to figure out what to do about
19 crack involved infants and their mothers when the
20 crack epidemic first hit Miami in 1985, the doctors

21 took me to the hospital and there were the babies in
22 the bassinets having not been held or talked to
23 except when changed or fed for six weeks as the
24 epidemic first hit.

25 Those doctors told me that the first three
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1 years of life were the most important. That that's
2 when the human being learned the concept of reward
3 and punishment and development and conscience; and
4 where fifty percent of all learned human response
5 was learned in the first year of life. All the
6 education at the end of the line won't make as much
7 difference as building a strong foundation up
8 front.

9 And when we speak of education, we have
10 got to speak of early childhood education with the
11 same reverence and the same commitment and the same
12 requirement as we speak of K through twelve.

13 We've got to make sure that people
14 appreciate teachers. I think they have got one of
15 the hardest jobs in the world. And something is
16 wrong with a nation that pays its football players
17 in the sixteen figures and doesn't pay its
18 teachers.

19 But teachers have got to be innovative,
20 too. We've got to make sure that our teachers are
21 teaching kids skills that will enable them to
22 graduate from high school with skills that can
23 enable them to earn a living wage.

24 I'm not sure what good algebra and
25 geometry are going to do, if you don't have a
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1 skill. And the skill may be learning how to operate
2 a new complex x-ray machine.

3 But let's learn skills. Let's learn
4 the basics that will enable us to accommodate the
5 new and emerging society where people may not hold

6 their job all their life. Where they're going to
7 change from job to job and technology is going to be
8 obsolete.

9 Let's make sure we have skills learned up
10 front in terms of computers, in terms of the basic
11 knowledge that will provide us the foundation for
12 the future.

13 If we can send a man to the moon, if we
14 can teach people to read, we can teach people how to
15 resolve conflict without knives and guns and fists;
16 and every school in the country should develop the
17 soundest, the most efficient conflict resolution
18 peer mediation program possible.

19 It is really possible to learn and if we
20 use the skills that are apparent in this room from
21 some of the people I've talked to, we can again make
22 that difference.

23 It is so important in the whole education
24 process both in the school and out of the school
25 that we speak out against hate and bigotry in this
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1 nation. Hate and bigotry are learned.

2 As teachers whether we be the community
3 police officer or the school teacher we have got to
4 teach people how to value this wonderful nation's
5 diversity. How to reach out to all without hatred,
6 without discrimination, without bigotry, and with a
7 positive, full appreciation of the wonder of the
8 diversity of the human spirit.

9 Let us understand though that if we have
10 the best schools in the country that's not going to
11 account for much if the kid walks out of the school
12 at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and gets hurt going
13 home because there's nobody supervising him or gets
14 into trouble. We should develop programs that make
15 afternoon and evening programs as available to kids
16 as K through twelve because that's all part of
17 raising them the right way.

18 And it is not indifferent parents. It is
19 the single parent struggling to make ends meet,

20 working and not knowing how to really provide for
21 the child. It is both parents working to provide
22 that child with a college education. We have got to
23 make sure that afternoon and evening programs are a
24 part of the community.

25 Now by this time you've said, she talks a
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1 lot but she hasn't told us how to afford it.

2 Again, if we make the investment up front
3 we can make the difference. If we utilize community
4 people who care we can make the difference.

5 In Sacramento, California, last week I saw
6 a young high school student teaching first graders
7 who's -- were having difficulties teaching them how
8 to read at 4:30 in the afternoon. He was doing it
9 as part of a community service project in his high
10 school. Next to him was a community police officer
11 who had finished her shift at 3 o'clock and was
12 contributing to her community through tutoring
13 programs.

14 An eighty-four-year-old man once stood up
15 in front of me and said, You know what I do three
16 mornings a week for three hours each morning?

17 I said, No, sir.

18 He said, Do you know how old I am?

19 I said, No, sir.

20 He says, I'm eighty-four and I volunteer
21 as a teacher's aide.

22 And the teachers -- the lady that was next
23 to him, she says, I'm a teacher for whom volunteers
24 can open some new worlds to our children.

25 I don't care whether you're eighty-four or
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1 eight, every single American can make a difference
2 in their community.

3 We've got to provide school to work
4 programs. We can do so much if we make sure that

5 our young people have jobs.

6 But at the same time we're going to see
7 children who end up in trouble, no matter what our
8 best efforts are. And we've got to define a
9 juvenile justice system that can truly make a
10 difference for all of our children, that's fair,
11 that provides an assessment up front without
12 labeling, and that seeks to eliminate the cause of
13 the problem in the first place. That provides for a
14 firm, fair sanction that fits the crime. But most
15 of all, provides for aftercare and follow-up so that
16 that child can go back to the community with a
17 chance of success.

18 We have too many young men in this country
19 eighteen to thirty who haven't been able to get jobs
20 because they have the albatross of a conviction
21 around their neck and we need to define programs for
22 them that can give them a chance to show what they
23 can do.

24 And we must bring our justice system
25 closer to the people. Too many people think our

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1 judges are remote. They're downtown. They're in
2 black robes. They don't understand my community.
3 They don't appreciate the problems.

4 Let's be bold as we have discussed with
5 the state chief justices and let's develop a concept
6 of community courts and community justice where
7 community police officers work with community
8 prosecutors in a community court with community
9 corrections officers and probation officers where
10 the school is the center of the, the community
11 center from 4 o'clock on in the afternoon into the
12 evening. Where the private sector joins in as a
13 partner in terms of providing job training and
14 apprenticeships. Where the medical community knows
15 that they can come and work together with others.
16 And where the judge knows the community, that the
17 community knows the judge, and there is confidence
18 in the whole process. We can do so much if we work

19 together in that regard.

20 But, you tell me, those are all good words
21 but the problem is just too big. You can't make a
22 difference.

23 You wouldn't be here if you didn't think
24 you could make a difference. Communities across
25 this nation are making a difference.

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1 Boston has reduced youth violence by
2 focusing on the whole problem of young people and
3 what we can do as police officers working with
4 community probation officers. We're doing so much
5 in Boston, to watch them at work with the private
6 sector joining with the community police in
7 providing child opportunities in the summer.

8 There are incidents across this country,
9 examples across this country of people that are
10 making a difference and probably best represented in
11 this room. So we cannot give up. We can make a
12 difference. We can solve this problem.

13 Yesterday in Washington I heard that you
14 had been as moved as many people had ever been by
15 Marlisa Cryer's comments yesterday. I said I wanted
16 to meet her. I had the chance to talk with her, and
17 anybody who thinks they can't make a difference
18 should always listen to her, and if you can't always
19 listen to her, remember, remember her.

20 Remember those who weren't here yesterday
21 that she's nine years old. She has cerebral palsy.
22 She's the student government president of her
23 elementary school. She speaks out, she makes a
24 difference, she cares, and she's going to be
25 President of the United States.

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1 Lest you be pessimistic and think we can't
2 make a difference, and we can't change this around,
3 I'm going to let Marlisa Cryer finish for me.

4 Thank you so very much.

5 C E R T I F I C A T E

6
7 STATE OF FLORIDA)
8 COUNTY OF ORANGE)

9
10 I, AARON S. KAUFMAN, Registered
11 Professional Reporter, certify that I was authorized
12 to and did stenographically report the foregoing
13 proceedings and that the transcript is a true and
14 complete record of my stenographic notes.

15 DATED this 3rd day of June, 1996.

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19 AARON S. KAUFMAN, RPR

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