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ADDRESS TO THE GOVERNOR'S CONFERENCE ON RACIAL

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RECONCILIATION

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U.S. ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

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16 Adam's Mark Hotel

17 Charlotte, North Carolina

18 October 27, 1997

19 7:00 PM

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ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

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Dinner

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12 Introduction of speaker by:

13 Representative Mel Watt - Democrat, N.C.

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15 U. S. ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO

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22 Conclusion

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1 MS. RENO: Thank you all for that very warm
2 welcome.

3 It is a wonderful privilege for me to be
4 back in North Carolina, and to be in a state for
5 which my grandmother never stopped loving and always
6 thought that North Carolina was the state that hung
7 the sun, the moon, and the stars.

8 Congressman Watt, thank you for that
9 introduction, but thank you more for the work you
10 have done as a leader, not just here in North
11 Carolina, but in the country, where you bring a

12 thoughtful and reasoned approach to the issues. I
13 wish I had heard your talk today because I think you
14 were really something, from all I've heard from my
15 colleagues.

16 I particularly salute you for calling on us
17 all to address the issue directly, to confront it
18 directly and not to pussyfoot around; so thank you
19 for that.

20 Secretary Moore, you and the Governor and
21 the Attorney General, I thank you for holding this
22 conference. You have brought so many people together
23 from throughout this great state: Law enforcement
24 personnel, community and religious leaders, local
25 officials, educators; people with the know-how and

1 with the caring to do something about this issue of
2 race in this state and in this country.

3 I'm very proud and glad that the Department
4 of Justice is part of this conference. You receive
5 funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance; and
6 the head of the BJA is here, Nancy Giss; and the
7 three US Attorneys from North Carolina, Janice
8 McKenzie Cole and Mark Calloway are here, and I'm
9 very proud of them. I just am glad that we can be a
10 part of this effort, because my whole undertaking as
11 Attorney General has been to form a partnership with
12 state and local officials across this land to address

13 the critical issues that we face throughout this
14 country and to do it in partnership; thoughtful and
15 collegial efforts that don't claim credit, don't
16 fight for turf, but do what's in the best interests
17 of the community, a state and a nation.

18 Efforts to bring together races, to
19 understand, to believe in each other, to trust in
20 each other, is one of the most important undertakings
21 we can engage in. Efforts to eliminate hatred, to
22 eliminate hate crimes, to eliminate bitterness, are
23 one of the most important undertakings we can engage
24 in. As President Clinton has said, the issue of race
25 is our challenge for the twenty-first century. There

1 are not many times when we have the opportunity to
2 improve upon the work of our founding fathers, but in
3 trying to bridge the gap between the American ideals
4 of justice, freedom and equality and the harsher
5 realities of our daily lives, we have a chance to
6 perfect our more perfect union.

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

12 Last month, I was with the President in

13 Little Rock, Arkansas, to celebrate the fortieth
14 anniversary of the integration of Central High. The
15 spirit that filled that audience that day was charged
16 with energy and understanding, with reconciliation
17 and goodwill; a far cry from the gauntlet of hatred,
18 bitterness and racial taunts that those students
19 walked through 40 years before. I came away from
20 that day and that moment with the feeling that if
21 ever there was an example of what reconciliation was
22 all about, it was in the spirit of that day. To look
23 at that high school that you had seen in so many
24 pictures, to see the pictures of those students 40
25 years ago and then to see what those individuals had

1 become, because of their education, because of their
2 determination, because of their goodwill, because of
3 their strength: That's what we should be about
4 today. The events of Little Rock 40 years ago were
5 part of a long road to freedom. We've still got a
6 long way to go.

7 In the 40 years since, our national journey
8 has taken us from starkly segregated classrooms to
9 more integrated ones; from Jim Crow laws to civil
10 rights laws for women, minorities and persons with
11 disabilities; from exclusionary literacy tests for
12 voting to the largest constituent of minorities ever
13 in congress; but 40 years after Little Rock, and 40

14 years or more after Brown versus Board of Education,
15 discrimination, hatred and the corrosive effects of
16 racial discrimination are still with us. We cannot
17 say that we have completed our journey when even
18 today racial and ethnic minorities and many women
19 still have a harder time getting a job, renting an
20 apartment, obtaining a loan, or getting into
21 college. We have not completed our journey when the
22 unemployment rate for African-American males is still
23 twice as high as it is for white males. Worst of
24 all, reports of violent hate crimes against racial
25 and ethnic minorities, Jews and Muslims, and gays and

1 lesbians, are disturbingly high. We are faced with
2 the paradox of having come so far in eliminating
3 blatant bigotry in our laws and customs only to be
4 confronted with less definable and often unconscious
5 prejudices and stereotypes which in some ways prove
6 more intractable than what we knew before. The
7 issues of race today are no longer as stark as a
8 "whites only" water fountain, but they are no less
9 real. They are not always easy to talk about. Frank
10 talk about race threatens fragile sensitivities and
11 political correctness, and the issues are hard to
12 resolve. Hard, but they are not unsolvable if we
13 will talk and communicate with respect and

14 understanding. That is the reason the President
15 began his initiative on race.

16 The President has committed himself to
17 helping to bring harmony to this country, to
18 eliminating wherever possible prejudice and hate
19 based on race, religion, or national origin.

20 In recent days, some people criticized the
21 President's race initiative as a good deal of talk
22 and not enough action. Let me say two things: First,
23 we should not underestimate the power of dialogue and
24 the power of people to sit down and talk with each
25 other with thought and feeling and understanding and

1 respect. We can all learn a lot more about that in
2 our daily lives. A great deal can be accomplished by
3 sitting down, face to face, and hashing out our
4 ideas, our feelings and our differences in a setting
5 of tolerance. Just as important, though, is our
6 commitment to action. We are going to continue to
7 enforce our civil rights laws vigorously and
8 faithfully without fear or favor. It is one of the
9 tasks, one of the challenges, that is most dear to
10 me, and it is one of my most important undertakings
11 in the Department.

12 Every day we bring cases to end beyond just
13 denial of employment and housing opportunities to
14 persons on account of race, ethnicity and gender; to

15 remove barriers that obstruct access for people; to
16 provide opportunities for people to purchase a home.

17 It is such a wonderful feeling to review a lending
18 discrimination case, to reach an understanding or to
19 reach a court order, and to see the number of
20 minorities who are able to borrow, to purchase homes,
21 grow up in this country and know what it means. We are
22 determined to continue that effort.

23 The civil rights laws guaranteed that we
24 are able to pursue the blessings of liberty free from
25 discrimination in all its ugly forms. We will

1 continue to fight as hard as we can to make that

2 guarantee a reality.

3 To this end, we now await hopefully the
4 confirmation of a very distinguished man as the
5 Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights
6 Division. President Clinton has nominated Bill Lann
7 Lee. He could not have picked a more superbly
8 qualified nominee. In his 23 years as a civil rights
9 lawyer, Bill Lee has worked tirelessly to address the
10 needs of Americans from all walks of life who have
11 sought help. The commitment to fighting injustice
12 was forged in his early years watching his immigrant
13 parents work long hours in a laundry, struggling to
14 earn a living. He heard customers call his father a

15 dumb Chinaman and other racial taunts. Yet, Bill Lee
16 saw that his father never lost faith in the American
17 dream. It was this faith shared with his son that
18 has shaped much of Bill's life. I know that Bill
19 will take up the wonderful work that was done by Deval
20 Patrick, former Assistant Attorney General of the
21 Civil Rights Division, a man I miss a great deal. I
22 look forward to Bill's confirmation and to working
23 with him on department priorities.

24 One of those priorities is the department's
25 effort to reduce hate crimes. In just 15 days, I

1 will be meeting with the President and more than 200

2 community and law enforcement leaders, like
3 yourselves, in a national forum on hate crimes.
4 There is never an excuse for violence against
5 innocent persons, but these kind of attacks,
6 committed because the victim has a different skin
7 color, practices a different faith, or comes from a
8 different country, threaten America's most cherished
9 ideals: They represent an attack not just on an
10 individual victim, but also on the victim's
11 community, and their impact is broader because they
12 send a message of hate intended to create fear.

13 The Department of Justice plays a vital
14 role in our nation's efforts to prosecute those
15 responsible for hate crimes. Since 1989, over 500

defendants, in more than half of the 50 states, have
been convicted on Federal criminal civil rights
charges for interfering with the federally protected
rights of minority victims. Virtually all these
defendants charged in these cases have been
convicted.

Many of our cases include charges of
criminal conspiracy, particularly where the
defendants were members of organized hate groups such
as the Ku Klux Klan, The Order, and various skinhead

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gangs. Among those recently prosecuted were four
defendants in Mississippi, members of a neo-nazi

3 skinhead organization, who plead guilty to conspiracy
4 and interfering with the housing rights of an
5 interracial couple by throwing a Molotov cocktail at
6 their trailer home.

7 In Passaic, New Jersey, two defendants
8 plead guilty to conspiracy charges for painting
9 swastikas and other anti-semitic threats of violence
10 on the entrance to a Jewish cemetery and on various
11 headstones in the cemetery. And in Cathedral City, a
12 defendant was convicted of assaulting an Hispanic man
13 in a public park. During the assault the defendant
14 used racial slurs against the victim and told the
15 victim to go back to his own country. These are just

16 a few examples of the crimes of hate we see and we
17 pursue.

18 One area of hate crime that has garnered
19 significant attention in these last months has been
20 the rash of arsons at our nation's houses of
21 worship. These fires have been the source of
22 terrible pain among the communities that have lost
23 their houses of worship, and they have included
24 synagogues and mosques as well as churches. The
25 President made it a top priority to prosecute those

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1 responsible for these crimes, and we have worked
2 tremendously hard to coordinate our efforts with our

3 counterparts in state and local law enforcement.

4 These efforts have paid off. Teamwork with local law

5 enforcement and the additional resources we have

6 brought to bear have resulted in a record rate of

7 arrests. We have opened investigations in over 500

8 arsons at houses of worship that have occurred in the

9 last two years, and have made over 230 arrests.

10 Just as important as the investigative

11 effort, we have seen Americans across the nation heed

12 the President's call to lend assistance to the

13 communities whose houses of worship have been burned.

14 Thousands of volunteers have donated their time,

15 hanging drywall, sawing wood; architects and

16 tradesmen have offered their services free of charge,

17 and corporations and individuals across the country
18 provided financial assistance.

19 These fires stirred our national
20 conscience: They threatened our common sense of
21 sanctuary, but the fires also brought us closer
22 together. They caused tens of millions of dollars in
23 damage, but the communities that suffered a burned
24 house of worship came to realize that thousands of
25 Americans really cared, and government responded.

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1 But we have to work through this to make sure that it
2 does not require a tragedy of burning or an
3 expenditure of money to eliminate crimes such as

4 this; we've got to prevent them in the first place.

5 We need to apply the lessons learned from the church

6 arson effort to hate crimes in general. We must

7 fashion and determine a unified response by national

8 and state leaders, by law enforcement at every level,

9 by civil, religious and educational organizations,

10 and by all the citizens of this country.

11 To improve our response to these crimes, we

12 must gain a better understanding of the problem. As

13 a result of the Hate Crime Statistics Act which was

14 enacted in 1990, the F.B.I. began collecting

15 information from law enforcement agencies around the

16 country. In 1991, the first year that the F.B.I.

17 reported its findings, 2,700 law enforcement agencies
18 in the country reported 4500 hate crimes. In 1995,
19 that number had increased from 2700 departments to
20 9800 law enforcement agencies who participated in the
21 data collection program and reported 7900 hate crimes
22 around the country. The preliminary figures we have
23 for 1996 suggest that the number of hate crime
24 incidents that have been reported has risen above
25 10,000. But we know that this number underestimates

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1 the true level of hate crimes. Many victims just
2 don't report the crimes. Oftentimes, they are afraid
3 of retaliation. Police departments sometimes don't

4 recognize the crime as a hate crime; many don't
5 collect any hate crime data, and the majority of
6 those that do, even in some large metropolitan areas,
7 report few or no hate crimes in their jurisdictions.
8 Better outreach to victim communities and increased
9 hate crime training for law enforcement officials are
10 essential if we're going to improve our response to
11 these crimes.

12 I was delighted to see that one of the
13 recommendations of the Governor's task force is to
14 broaden the reach of hate crime training among the
15 state's law enforcement agencies, and to improve the
16 data collection underway in North Carolina. In 1991,
17 no North Carolina agency reported any hate crime

18 data. In 1995, 59 agencies reported 52 hate crimes.

19 There is more work to be done here and around the

20 country to improve reporting. We also need to

21 encourage victims to report incidents of hate crime.

22 The reasons for underreporting of hate crimes are

23 varied: As I indicated, some people are afraid of

24 retaliation; language and cultural barriers impede

25 reporting; many people feel that people simply won't

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1 understand and they will be dismissed. We have got

2 to remember, as we do throughout the criminal justice

3 system, that too often the victim is the forgotten

4 person in the system. We have got to make it, the

5 process, understandable for all so that they can
6 easily report the crime; we must work together to
7 make sure that victims are at ease.

8 We must understand particularly what it is
9 like for a young witness to observe hate for the
10 first time. You look at children in the first grade,
11 still innocent, still believing in others, and then
12 you see the thought of what it must be like to see
13 their church burned for no reason; to see some
14 example of hate. We have not only got to reach out
15 to these victims, but we have got to reach out to
16 immediately respond with counseling and other support
17 mechanisms that help them begin to heal before the

18 scar of that hatred is burned into them.

19 I'm asking the three US Attorneys to meet
20 regularly with state and local prosecutors and law
21 enforcement officials to ensure that investigations
22 of hate crime are coordinated. First, so that we can
23 identify the crime. Sometimes it may be what
24 somebody might take as a commonplace crime. We need
25 to investigate and make sure that we delve into it to

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1 understand its true nature. We want to work together
2 with local law enforcement to ensure an appropriate
3 investigation.

4 I see people here from local law

5 enforcement and I remember sometimes the Feds would
6 come to town when I was a local prosecutor and
7 sometimes it wasn't as smooth as it could be. We
8 want to make it as smooth as possible. We're not
9 interested in who gets the credit, we're not
10 interested in turf, we're interested in seeing that
11 people who commit crimes of hate are brought to
12 justice and get sentenced the right way, no matter
13 who. It is important to note that if we do not
14 prosecute, victims won't believe in us and they won't
15 come forward. If we do not prosecute, haters won't
16 back down, and they won't think we mean what we say.

17 I'm asking US Attorneys to reach out to

18 state and local advocacy groups to explain the

19 Federal jurisdiction in these types of crimes; to
20 explain the processes; to let them understand how
21 these cases are handled. I would encourage all of
22 you to work with law enforcement officials in your
23 area and establish contact with the local field
24 office of the FBI. By making these contacts, you
25 will ensure that information about hate crime

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1 incidents reach the right authorities, that incidents
2 of bias crime get focused attention, and that victims
3 of these crimes are encouraged to report them.

4 Now, I have been on the fussing end where
5 advocacy groups have fussed at me, as a local

6 prosecutor, and they fussed real loud and real long.

7 One of the things that I learned is, you talk, you

8 sit down with them, you meet with them, you work out

9 the issues, but most of all, you talk in good faith

10 and with respect and you find that they become your

11 greatest allies and your strongest supporters. It is

12 imperative, as we address the issue of race and hate

13 crimes, that we talk through what may be

14 disagreements to reach our common goal of seeing that

15 people who commit hate crimes are brought to

16 justice.

17 The Department is also conducting a

18 thorough review of the Federal laws concerning hate

19 crimes, to determine how they can be strengthened,
20 and I believe that North Carolina is doing the same.
21 I know that North Carolina has hate crime statutes,
22 and I'm pleased that the conference is examining this
23 issue, but the battle must be fought not just with
24 laws and in the law books, but in our hearts, as
25 well. We must look to the root causes of hate

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1 crime. Intolerance often begins not with a violent
2 act, but with a small indignity: A bigoted remark;
3 the African-American who is followed in the retail
4 mall; the harrassment of immigrants. To move forward
5 as one community, we must work against the

6 stereotypes and the prejudices that spawn these
7 actions. Here we must bring in our educators and our
8 religious leaders and our educators.

9 Hatred is a learned response; it can be
10 unlearned. Hatred is an act of cowardice: When you
11 confront haters they oftentimes back down. We must
12 engage our schools in the crucial task of teaching
13 our young children moral values and social
14 responsibilities. Educators can play a vital role in
15 preventing the development of the prejudice and
16 stereotyping that leads to hate crimes. And
17 Americans must learn to communicate with each other.
18 Not communication in terms of 30-second sound bites
19 on TV and advertising cliches, but in small, old,

20 honest words of thought and feeling. We must learn
21 to solve problems together and not raise obstacles to
22 every solution that people put forth. We must start
23 early in our schools teaching our children how to
24 resolve conflict and disagreement without knives, and
25 guns, and fists, and racial taunts. If we can send a

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1 man to the moon, we can teach our children this
2 skill. And I have had the opportunity in Washington
3 D.C., in these last 18 months, to watch teachers
4 being taught how to mediate and how to negotiate, and
5 teachers being taught how to teach children how to do
6 the same, and then I have watched the children in the

7 schools develop peer review programs that are making
8 a difference. It is something that can be taught.

9 And today, in Orlando, Florida, I saw a very special

10 school come together to talk about what they had done

11 to eliminate drugs from their school and how they

12 were drug-free. But most of all, I saw children from

13 different backgrounds, different colors, come

14 together in understanding.

15 This great state has some of the greatest

16 institutions of higher education I know. It seems to

17 me that part of our effort, and since you have taken

18 the lead in this state conference, part of our effort

19 can be in asking higher education to teach our

20 teachers how to resolve conflicts, how to teach
21 children to resolve conflicts; how to teach our
22 children to communicate.

23 Have you looked at children lately? They
24 sometimes look down. They don't listen. They don't
25 listen with a listening ear. They're not trying to

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1 solve problems, they're just trying to wade through
2 their day because it is so complicated. Let us
3 encourage our teachers to learn to teach these skills
4 just as they learn to teach kids how to spell and to
5 read and to do arithmetic.

6 There are two great influences on children

7 outside the family: They strike me as the teacher and
8 as the police officer. It has been so gratifying for
9 me to travel to so many places in this country and
10 see community police officers working with youngsters
11 to develop trust and understanding rather than
12 detention and suspension. It was a wonderful scene
13 to watch two young men come from Boston with their
14 community police officers, to stand in the great hall
15 of the Department of Justice, and tell the President
16 of the United States how these guys, pointing to the
17 two police officers, got them out of trouble, got
18 them into constructive programs, and they were headed
19 for college because of what these men had done for
20 them.

21 Just think of what can happen if we made
22 sure that every police officer in the basic law
23 enforcement academy, and every teacher, was trained
24 in conflict resolution, and that they were, in turn,
25 trained to teach others how to resolve conflicts in a

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1 peaceful, respectful way, without the tensions of
2 race. We can do so much if we use the strength and
3 the wealth of knowledge in this great state and in
4 the educational institutions of this great state.

5 But then, let's go further. Sometimes it's
6 not conflict, sometimes it's hatred. But hatred is
7 learned. How do we prevent it from being learned?

8 How do we take those wonderful first- and second-
9 graders and teach them how never to hate? If they
10 learn to hate, how do we teach them to unlearn?

11 Again, if we can send men to the moon and we can
12 teach people how to read, we ought to be able to
13 teach them how to do this, and North Carolina ought
14 to lead the way.

15 But there is one final point. For too
16 long, in this country we have forgotten and neglected
17 our children. We have not supervised them enough; we
18 have not spent enough time loving them, we've not
19 spent enough time disciplining them; we have left
20 them alone and unsupervised in the afternoons and

21 evenings after school; we have not given them the
22 health care they need to be strong and healthy human
23 beings; we have not given them early childhood
24 development processes that will prepare
25 them for the future.

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1 Where does hatred start? Hatred starts in
2 somebody oftentimes who is alone, confused and
3 unloved. Hatred starts with somebody who doesn't
4 feel that they have control over their life and who
5 lashes out at others. Hatred starts with somebody
6 who doesn't have enough self confidence to talk back
7 in a respectful way, but instead lashes back. I look

8 at crime and I can see points along a child's way
9 where we could have intervened and made a difference
10 in that child's life to make sure they never
11 committed a crime. I see points along the way, no
12 matter whether it's a child from a minority community
13 or a child who has grown up without supervision from
14 parents who should have known better. All of us have
15 got to make an investment in children so that they
16 will grow as strong and positive human beings; so
17 that they will have the self confidence when somebody
18 jibes at them to say, wait a minute, that's not the
19 way we should do things; let's sit down and talk
20 about it; who has the education so that they have the
21 self respect that they can go to college. That there

22 is no discrimination, that they have equal
23 opportunity so that they have the same chances to
24 prepare for jobs. We have got to give our children
25 the tools to be strong, positive human beings. They

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1 are so wonderful. They are so strong and brave, and
2 they want to be somebody and to make a difference in
3 this country's life. They all want to belong and to
4 be a part of something.

5 Let us pledge ourselves if we are ever
6 going to do anything about reconciliation amongst all
7 our people; if we are ever going to indicate that we
8 pledge to unite to give our children supervision they

9 need afternoons and evenings, to give our children
10 the education they need to prepare them for the
11 twenty-first century; to give our children the health
12 care they need to be strong and healthy and positive;
13 to give our children role models and mentors that
14 talk not of hate and not of put-down, but of positive
15 can-do goodwill.

16 When I go to a community, I sometimes talk
17 to kids who have been in trouble or who are in
18 trouble now, and I ask them what could have been done
19 to prevent it. Again and again they tell me,
20 something to do in the afternoons and evenings,
21 something positive, and then secondly, somebody to

22 talk to: Somebody who understands how difficult it
23 is to grow up in America today; somebody who knows
24 when to give me a pat on the back and when to give me
25 a good fussing, and somebody who knows when I deserve

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1 it.

2 Each of us can make a difference. I saw
3 those children today. Those children in that Orlando
4 school are going to grow up if they were on the same
5 track in five years in another school, but the
6 future, a future not of hate, a future not of racism,
7 but a future where they were going to college, they
8 were going to make a difference, they were going to

9 be drug-free. Each one of us can do it.

10 Now, there are some people that tell me the
11 problem is too overwhelming. When I came to
12 Washington, I thought: What's it going to be like to
13 come from a community where I knew an awful lot of
14 people in a nation of millions and millions of
15 people? It seemed so overwhelming. But when I come
16 to North Carolina, when I go to Orlando, when I go to
17 small communities across this nation, I see people
18 who are making a difference. When I see conferences
19 like this, I believe with all my heart that we can
20 achieve racial reconciliation in this country. We
21 can end hate, and it's going to start here. God
22 bless you all for being here, for caring and for

23 carrying on.

24 (Proceeding concluded)

25

1 STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)

2 County of Mecklenburg) ss.

3

4 I, A. ROBIN J. SCHENCK, a stenotype

5 reporter, and Notary Public in and for the State of

6 North Carolina, do hereby certify that I reported in

7 stenotype the proceedings had of this matter

8 previously captioned herein; that I thereafter

9 reduced my said stenotype notes to typewritten form

10 via computer-aided transcription; and that the
11 foregoing transcript, pages 1 to 24, both inclusive,
12 constitutes a full, true and accurate record of all
13 proceedings had upon the said matter, and of the
14 whole thereof.

15 WITNESS my hand as a stenotype reporter and
16 Notary Public, this 28th day of October, 1997.

20 A. Robin J. Schenck

21 Stenotype Reporter, Notary Public

22 My commission expires: 9/21/2002

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