

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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(TEASE)

**JANET RENO:** I don't like guns. Didn't have a gun, don't like 'em, and wish they weren't there, but I think we've got to get the Brady bill passed. We have got to get a ban on assault weapons passed. I think we can get it passed, and I think that this will be a beginning.

**JANET RENO:** The whole purpose of the law is to value human life and, therefore, for the law to be involved in legally taking a person's life is inconsistent to me.

**JANET RENO:** The time has come in America on the crime issue, to stop talking liberal versus conservative, to stop talking tough or soft. It's time to start talking common sense.

**BILL MOYERS V/O:** In the next hour, Attorney General Janet Reno talks about crime and punishment, law and justice. I'm Bill Moyers.

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**BILL MOYERS:** First a question of protocol, do you go by General Reno?

**JANET RENO:** I don't believe that generals belong in the law, and I have subsequently discovered that it referred to the attorney who did general work for the Crown, so Janet, or Ms. Reno, or "hey, you" are fine.

**BILL MOYERS:** (LAUGHTER) All right, well protocol says Ms. Reno, then. The Treasury Department's report on the Waco tragedy reports that federal agents, its own agents, violated standing orders, and then lied about their conduct. When the Justice Department report comes out next week, if it is found and reported that some of your own people did the same thing, will they be penalized -- will they be punished?

**JANET RENO:** I never deal in "what ifs." I think that's one of the worst things that you can do in this business. I've tried to keep an open mind, to see our report, and then to take whatever action is required. If there is wrong doing, I intend to pursue it as vigorously as possible. If there are suggestions as to steps that can be taken, to avoid tragedies like this in the future, I want to try my best to see that those steps are taken. As I have said all along, this was an extraordinarily difficult situation. And I want to do everything I can to be prepared for the future, and to take corrective action.

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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**BILL MOYERS:** The Treasury report has been praised for putting up front its own mistakes, its errors, the judgements of its people -- holding what happened up to public scrutiny. And there is speculation in town that this is something the FBI simply cannot do. Henry Ruth, the former Watergate Special Prosecutor, who has been an advisor to the Treasury Department in this report, says he just doubts that the FBI can be as candid about its own evaluation, as Treasury can be. Will Mr. Ruth be surprised next week?

**JANET RENO:** One of the things that we have tried to do is to make sure that we are looked at by independent people. Mr. Ed Dennis, who is a former United States Attorney under the Republican administration from Philadelphia, who also served as Assistant Attorney General in the criminal division under my predecessors ... we have asked him to review and to look backwards, to make sure that no stone is unturned. I want to do everything that I can to make sure that we look at ourselves as closely and with as much scrutiny as possible.

**BILL MOYERS:** You've had several months to look back on that tragedy. Have you had any second thoughts?

**JANET RENO:** One always has second thoughts, in terms of second-guessing oneself and waking up in the middle of the night, and saying could I have done it this way, or could I have done it that way. One of the things that I am trying to do is to keep an open mind, so that I can have the benefit of Mr. Dennis' observations and the independent experts that we've asked to review several aspects of the operation. So I don't have any preconceived notions of what I should be doing for the future.

**BILL MOYERS:** I ask these questions because I was talking this morning to a 30 year-old mother, and we were talking about what has been going on in New York. There are hearings going on into police corruption, and it turns out to be very pervasive. Just this week, the former Chief Judge of the court of New York went to prison for having harassed his lover. The schools are generally perceived to be rife with corruption in New York. And she was saying to me if you can't trust the schools, if you can't trust the police, if you can't trust the responsible justice agencies of our government, whom do I tell my son he can trust? What is going on in society, she said, that's causing all of this mistrust, this loss of faith, this incompetence, this deceit in high places.

**JANET RENO:** I think that corruption, and incompetence and deceit, have been with us for a very long time, and I think it is imperative that those of us who care, enough to want to get rid of any aspect of it we can, fight as hard as we can to do so. But I think at the same time we have got to recognize that there are police officers who are wonderful people -- oriented towards their neighborhood, oriented towards the community who put their life on the line each day. There are school administrators who

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

---

have overwhelming tasks handed to them because for so long society has forgotten and neglected its children. There are school teachers, who spend hours and hours of extra time each day helping kids at risk. There are so many people that we can find to trust in this day and time. And we have got to get rid of the bad ones, and do everything we can to support the good ones. I wondered what I would find when I came across America after having been a child of Dade County for so long. I am so impressed again with the people I meet -- dedicated people who have developed community-based programs that are helping children. People who are doing something for the elderly. There are so many people to trust.

**BILL MOYERS:** But it does seem to me, it's an impression, that we've reached almost a critical mass of distrust of our institutions. There is a critical mass of crime in the country right now. Coming to Washington this week, with the shootings going on, the robberies, what has been happening in Florida, that there's this sense of a crisis in the country right now in regard to the social fabric. Somebody said, "It's not the economy stupid, it's the social fabric."

**JANET RENO:** This is what I've been saying for a very long time. As I look at it, I think we watched Washington and the federal government solve a lot of problems during the depression. We watched Washington win World War II. We watched Washington deal with civil rights issues. And then came Watergate. Then came additional problems, and we ...

**BILL MOYERS:** I think you have to put Vietnam in there, too. I was in Washington at that time ...

**JANET RENO:** I was coming to Vietnam, in just a moment -- and then came Vietnam, where we sent our soldiers to fight a war, and we questioned it and there was distrust. Then came the eighties, and we thought we could solve all our problems with a lot of money, just throw money at it, without looking at how that money was spent. Without using money and the efforts of the federal government to build trust. Then the money started drying up and we pushed the burden to the states without giving them money. Then the states turned around and pushed it to the community. Where I see great things happening in America today is in the communities. There, people understand their needs and resources, they understand that their back is up against the wall -- that they have got to build a trust. My -- the community where I come from has been through such divisive times, but they understand that they've got to trust and work together and build together. They are going to have further problems. But I think that is a lot of where we've got to focus. We've got to stop having fussing matches between Republicans and Democrats. I've tried to talk to both sides, to sit down and talk about bi-partisan and non-partisan issues that affect the judicial...

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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**BILL MOYERS:** You are an idealist in this town.

**JANET RENO:** Well, I worked for the House Judiciary Committee of the Florida House of Representatives, and there were times when the Republicans were going to disagree with me. But there were so many efforts that we were able to resolve, based on a mutual consensus, because we talked and we reasoned together. I want to do the same thing between prosecutors and defense lawyers, between the Department of Justice, and Congress, and the Judiciary. There is so much that we can do if we sit down and talk about our problems. And I think, in terms of violence, our major problem -- and I've been saying it, and I am finding agreement throughout America -- is that we don't make punishment mean what it says. There are too many people getting out of prison prematurely, who are dangerous offenders and career criminals, and we ought to make sure that we've got enough prison cells to house those people for the length of time the judges are sentencing them. But there are other people coming back to the community, sooner rather than later, that come back with the same problems that caused the crime in the first place, and we did nothing to address that. We've got to give them an opportunity to come back with a chance of success, by addressing their drug problem and doing something about job training. But the major problem that I see from my experience in Miami, as a prosecutor for fifteen years, is that crime, drugs, teen pregnancy, youth gangs, the youth violence that is terrorizing this nation, are symptoms of a deeper problem in society, and that is that for too often, in the last thirty years, we have forgotten and neglected our children. And I think that's where we've got to focus -- on punishment that means what it says at the end of the line, and prevention up front.

**BILL MOYERS:** What did it say to you that, as we've now learned, the Waco cult had enough hardware for a small army? Fifty nine handguns, twelve shot guns, ninety-four rifles, forty-five machine guns, and almost two million rounds of ammunition, all of it apparently legally purchased from forty-three suppliers in nineteen states. What does it say to you when anyone, lunatic or not, can accumulate his own arsenal?

**JANET RENO:** I think that we have got to make sure that we don't put weapons that are not used for sporting purposes in the hands of people who do not need them. We have got to look at guns and what they are doing to America.

**BILL MOYERS:** But many of these weapons, if not all of them, were purchased by federally licensed arms dealers. One of two hundred and fifty thousand such people in this country who can get a license, to sell these guns for thirty dollars.

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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**JANET RENO:** I don't like guns. Didn't have a gun, don't like 'em, and wish they weren't there, but I think we've got to get the Brady bill passed. We have got to get a ban on assault weapons passed. I think we can get it passed, and I think that this will be a beginning. But I suggest to you that the problems -- you've focused on Waco -- but let us focus for a moment on the guns on our streets. I think when we look at violence on our streets, particularly guns in the hands of youngsters, we have got to look beyond that. Because even if we pass a law saying that you can't sell guns to minors, there is still going to be this situation where they steal, or they obtain it from a parent or something like that. We have got to address the culture that has caused the reaction, the resort to violence in the first place. And from everything that I have learned to date, from hard-nosed police officers, from sociologists, from school teachers, from people who are on the front lines, we have got to develop a continuum of care for our children, that re-weaves the fabric of society around them. It is going to do no good to have a juvenile justice program that is great for a couple of kids, unless we invest in the kids up front.

**BILL MOYERS:** But when guns like this can be bought by federally licensed arms dealers, isn't the federal government becoming an accessory -- hasn't it become an accessory to the merchants of death?

**JANET RENO:** I think those are some of the statements that we've got to shy away from, in terms of using labels like that. I think we have got to focus on how we limit the distribution of assault weapons at least. How we make sure that guns are in the hands of people who know how to capably, safely and lawfully use them, and have evidenced an ability to do so.

**BILL MOYERS:** But the reality in this town is that the National Rifle Association has a veto over what you want to do.

**JANET RENO:** I think that this, again, is an opportunity for the people to speak out. Almost wherever I go in this country, people are speaking out about guns, wanting guns off the streets. Wanting guns out of the hands of people who cannot or do not know how to safely and lawfully use them. And I think that Congress will listen.

**BILL MOYERS:** Why are we so violent a society? One murder every 22 minutes, one act of violence every 17 seconds. Our murder rate is four times that of Europe, eleven times that of Japan -- why are we so violent, from what you've learned on the streets, in Miami?

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: 'JANET RENO'

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**JANET RENO:** First of all, too often our punishment doesn't mean what it says. We talk big about punishment, and then we don't provide enough prison cells to carry it out. I thought that that might just be a problem in Florida. But that's the problem around the country. And I think we've got to say to the truly dangerous offender, the career criminal, there are going to be enough prison cells to house you for the length of time the judges sentence you, and you are going to stay away for a long time. But one of our problems is that we have seen so much drug motivated crime and violence. And so we send somebody off to prison for three years, because he did something as a result of his substance abuse problem. We don't treat him -- we send him back to the community maybe in 50 to 60 percent of the sentence in many states. He comes back there without any skill, he still has a substance abuse problem, and guess what he is going to be doing the day he gets back? If it's not the day he gets back, it's going to be pretty soon thereafter that he is resorting to drugs again, and robbing to get cash to sustain his drug habit. I'd like to see us approach it from a carrot and stick approach that says, "look, do you want to get punished, or do you want to get treatment? We will work with you in the latter, but if you mess up, you are going to prison." I think we've got to address the problem of domestic violence in America. When I first took office, I did a study of people who had been killed in Dade County over a 25 year period. Forty percent were boyfriend, girlfriend, ex-spouse, husband and wife related homicides. We look at domestic violence as if it just became, or had become, an accepted phenomenon. And I don't think we can accept it. The child who sees his father beat his mother comes to accept violence as a way of life. We've seen it handed down from one generation to another now. There are excellent programs around the country. The medical community is going to have to get more involved through emergency room programs that refer people for counseling, to try to interrupt this cycle of violence.

But frankly, as I pointed out earlier, I think that one of the principle reasons for violence is that we have forgotten and neglected our children. I started focusing on juveniles when I first took office, and said, I really want to build a good juvenile division, so that we can do something to prevent crime. I looked at the 16 and 17 year-olds I was prosecuting, and I looked at their pre-sentence investigation. They had never known their father, they didn't see their mother very often. They had dropped out of school, they had become the drug dealer's gofer. They didn't have any structure or order in their life. And I knew that I would never be able to change all the juveniles, if I waited that long. So we started focusing on drop-out prevention programs, since we saw a correlation between those that dropped out of school and those that became delinquent. But drop-out programs at 11, 12 and 13, are too late. By that time, the kid has lost his self-esteem, he has fallen two grades behind, people call him dumb and he starts acting out in other ways, to attract attention to himself.

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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**BILL MOYERS:** This week in Florida, there was yet another visitor to the state killed on the highway while he was riding in a car. Stranger drove up, pointed a gun at him and blew him away. We've learned that while some of these assaults on tourists had to do with robbery, some of them had nothing to do with more than just a desire to inflict pointless harm on someone. What do you make of that?

**JANET RENO:** (If you have a child born to a crack abusing mother, who doesn't get proper preventative care, who has a life at zero to three) -- every child development expert I've talked to tells me that zero to three are the most formative years. The child learns the concept of reward and punishment and develops a conscience. If you don't develop a conscience at zero to three, you're going to do things like that ...

**BILL MOYERS:** How do you develop a conscience?

**JANET RENO:** You develop a conscience by being loved, by having guidance, by having limits laid down, by being punished when you don't comply with those limits, but being punished fairly and consistent with the crime. But as importantly, because I remember being punished as I grew up, after you got punished and after you got sent to your room and after you got spanked and after your mother got furious at you, you knew that she was going to be there to love you and carry on. What we've got to do is give families and children the opportunity to grow in a strong and constructive way. Now your question is going to be to me, "Well how can government do it?" Government can do a lot more to preserve families, to protect them, to give them a chance to grow as strong constructive human beings by providing care and attention and prevention up front rather than waiting till the crisis occurs.

**BILL MOYERS:** Do you anticipate more violence from the young people in this country?

**JANET RENO:** The crack epidemic hit Miami in 1985. Up until that point homicides had started down. We saw a significant increase in crack-involved babies. We don't know what impact that will have on them. The crack epidemic has hit other cities in the country later. So we have got to come to grips with that and develop programs that focus on these children who were at risk, particularly as a result of crack involvement. We've got to focus on all our children and give them a chance to grow as strong constructive human beings.

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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**BILL MOYERS:** You make this summons calling for more government action and more public expenditures at a time when our deficit is already horrendous and there is a great mistrust of government in the country for its failures for 25 years. I understand the call, but I wonder about the practicality of it.

**JANET RENO:** But do I? A dollar spent for prenatal care will save three dollars for health care cost associated with low birth weights that were caused by failure to get it. A dollar spent for immunization will save a lot of health care cost, will save a lot of behavioral problems resulting from measles or epidemics or the like. And it's not just government that has to do it. Have you looked on school playgrounds and in parks and seen who's out there recently? More and more Americans are going out to volunteer. Have you looked in schools to see who's there in terms of people who are mentors or tutors? People are going out and caring. Lawyers, instead of just going into the courtroom to win a battle against discrimination, are adopting classrooms or adopting blocks. DEA agents are adopting students, classrooms. America is coming out and making a difference. I am firmly convinced that if we use the community and the neighborhood as the basis for our action, if government helps provide the prevention efforts up front, provides the family preservation services, if government invests up front in its people and lets its people do their thing -- they can do it a lot better than government -- families can be a lot stronger if they have a system where they can function knowing that they don't have to worry about health care, knowing that if they change jobs or if they lose their jobs, they'll still be able to get health care, that their children can have a chance to learn that they can have a future.

**BILL MOYERS:** Odd words coming from somebody -- I mean, your job is to run the FBI, direct the FBI, the Immigration Bureau, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Bureau of Prisons and here you are talking about social programs.

**JANET RENO:** I've got an office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. I'm concerned about how we use our dollars. I've been on the front lines of the fight in Miami for 15 years. I've seen what doesn't work. There was a man who had his desk in this room, 25 years ago, 30 years ago ...

**BILL MOYERS:** That was?

**JANET RENO:** Robert Kennedy. He said the same thing and I had a very poignant thing happen to me. I went to Tallahassee about ten days ago to help dedicate a memorial to LeRoy Collins, the greatest governor in Florida's history, the man who had put his political future on the line to help ease racial tension in Florida, who was a magnificent person. And I came across a speech he gave in 1965. And it -- here was a governor now -- and it said, "Unless we understand the effect of substandard housing,



## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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poor education, indifference to our children, police brutality, all of these factors, the effect of these will be violence again this summer." Well what we have seen was violence again and again and again. All of us throughout America have an obligation and a duty to speak out about what makes common sense and what are the solutions to our problem. And I am hearing from every place in America, people from all different walks of life speaking out and saying, "What can I do? How can I be involved? How can I make a difference?"

**BILL MOYERS:** You've been saying that very consistently, very effectively, over the months that you have been in Washington, but take just one example -- a 13 year-old who has been arrested for the murder of a British tourist recently, in your home state of Florida. Thirteen years old. Had been in the juvenile justice system, for five years, 56 counts against him. Now, seeing how easily the juvenile justice system lost that kid, what makes you think we can devise social services that can get down to the age one to three, and intervene, where there is no stable family, where there is very little to work with?

**JANET RENO:** Well, you have put your finger on the major problem -- we wait until the kid is in trouble. We wait until he is falling behind in school. We wait until a crisis occurs in America. The whole health care initiative, that the administration has undertaken, is a reflection that we've got to do prevention, rather than wait for the crisis. We've got to do prevention, before we wait for a nine year-old to get in trouble, with all the obvious signs having been there. And that's what we have tended to do. We've tended to say, "Look, we've got a great juvenile justice program that will work." But if the child comes to the justice system, half grown, in terms of child development, that is not going to work, if the child ...

**BILL MOYERS:** But the question is how, how do we get down to...

**JANET RENO:** Here's, here's...

**BILL MOYERS:** We have not been very good in this country, despite our efforts, to deliver social services, at that level.

**JANET RENO:** We haven't been very good, because we wait to put all our resources into the crisis when it occurs. We would rather build prisons than to provide immunization to every child in America. We'd rather build remedial programs, in our schools, than make sure that every parent, pregnant woman, in America had pre-natal care. We would rather wait for costly, costly medical treatment in our emergency rooms and in tertiary systems in our hospitals, rather than give our children preventative medical care. We'd rather have probation officers by the hundreds, rather than put programs after school and in the evenings for children who are at risk. We would rather

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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try to do re-training programs, and special training programs, for people who are 25, than put an emphasis on our public schools that gave our teachers time to teach. We wait until the crisis occurs. And the second thing we do, is even if we start early, we sometimes do it in a disjointed way. Some places may provide the pre-natal care, but they won't provide child care, in that age of zero to three. Others will provide a wonderful Head Start program, but then when that child is at six or seven, and is unsupervised, afternoon and in the evening, much of the results are lost. We have got to work with communities in developing a partnership that can, first of all, give parents a chance to succeed. Because they are the victims of the same thing. I have had so many people call me, saying, what am I going to do, I am about to lose my home. I don't know where to go. And end up in the back seat, homeless.

**BILL MOYERS:** But why is all of this happening? Why is it that, three-quarters of all of the assaults on tourists in Florida this last year have come from black men between the ages of 18 to 24. What do you read from that?

**JANET RENO:** I think there are a whole range of issues that come together. I think one of the issues is that we have put an intolerable burden on our public schools over these last 30 years. After World War II, we watched both parents start to go to work, ever more often. We watched the family begin to disintegrate. And we watched the schools have to pick up the burden. Just think of what the schools have had to do -- the unprecedented educational challenge. In the last hundred years, we've sent a man to the moon, learned about atomic energy, flight, televisions, telephones, lasers, computers, an extraordinary burst of human knowledge. And it has been difficult if not impossible for the schools to keep up with that, with these related social burdens. They've also been the agency public and private most responsible for ending 200 years of slavery. We've given them all of these burdens, all of these challenges, and we have given them totally inadequate resources. Something is wrong with a nation that will pay its football players six figures, and pay its teachers, who are sometimes saints, what we do.

**BILL MOYERS:** I know, but is there any evidence in your experience, Ms. Reno, that the state can organize itself to function as a substitute for the family, at that early an age --that it can deal with the situation effectively when there is no functioning home?

**JANET RENO:** No, I don't think the state can do it. But government can form a partnership with neighborhoods and communities, because that is the third thing that I think we have failed to do. Washington said it knew better. I used to sit around the table so many days, when Washington came to town, and said, "We are the federal government and here is what you should do, and we know better how to do it." And then the state would come in and say the same thing. What we found is that if you involve the community itself, start with the small neighborhood, ask people, involve them,

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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involve them in community policing, and social workers who relate to the community and look at the family as a whole. So many families out there, who are at risk, care deeply for their children, care deeply for their future. But have seen so many doors slammed because we spend more time in determining whether somebody is eligible for a service than we do in providing them the service. We don't give them the service when they could really use it. To become self sufficient. We wait until the crisis occurs. Where I see government working with the community, not in the government structuring the system, but in re-weaving the fabric of society around families. That is where the difference is made.

**BILL MOYERS:** In the meantime, as somebody says in the Washington Post this week, the civil authorities have lost control of the streets. Would you be in favor of using the National Guard in the most crime ravaged areas of our country?

**JANET RENO:** I think we have to explore how we properly utilize forces such as the National Guard.

**BILL MOYERS:** But you are willing to consider that?

**JANET RENO:** We are already considering it in backing up police officers, but we have got to make very, very sure, because I don't think we have lost control, if we use our resources smart, and if we use them wisely. We have lost control because we have threatened to build more prisons. We have threatened sentences and then we have not followed through, with sentences for violent crime that mean what we say. We are looking for easy answers, and there are no easy answers to this problem.

**BILL MOYERS:** You know, there is one poll which I read just this week, that says 88 percent of the people agree with your call for spending more on education and social services as an effective way to fight crime. And only 30 percent think that building more prisons is the way to do it. If that is the case, why are the politicians building more prisons? And you called for building more prisons, earlier in this interview, yourself.

**JANET RENO:** No, I did something if you will remember...

**BILL MOYERS:** You caught me in a mishearing, huh?

**JANET RENO:** What I think happens too often is that we rotate people who could probably better be treated in the community through the carrot and stick approach, that I described. They take up costly prison cells that are better used for the truly dangerous, dangerous offenders to incapacitate them, to get them off and away from the streets. I am not sure that in many places in America if we used our prison resources wisely and

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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made sure they were used for the really dangerous people while we used the carrot and stick approach on the others, to say, "Look, you got your choice, you want to work with us? We will work with you." Now that won't be enough, because those people that come back to the community ... I've had police officer after police officer tell me, "Ms. Reno, you've got to find me a place to put these guys when you send them back. It's fine for you to give them drug treatment, but it is going to do no good if they come back to that apartment looking out over the open-air drug market, where they got into trouble in the first place." We've got to provide after-care, and follow-up. It again is not a simple answer. But there are some key answers along the way. The fact that throughout America there are people on waiting lists for drug treatment, who want it. Who have a drug problem who are going to get desperate, who are going to go out and rob or steal, unless they get treatment. The fact that they are on waiting lists is one of the greatest examples of the penny-wise, pound-foolish approach we take, and another reason why I think it is imperative that we get the health care reform passed. I have had people from all walks of life call me in desperation. "Ms. Reno, you've got to help me, my son needs help, he's finally calling for help, he's stolen us blind, I've had to put bars on my windows, to keep him from breaking in. But you've got to help him. He doesn't have insurance, he doesn't have money, please help him."

**BILL MOYERS:** You've been critical of the Bush administration and his attacking the supply of drugs on the neglect of treatment. But it looks to me as if President Clinton's budget is about the same as President Bush's had been, something like 64 percent of the budget going for law enforcement, 36 percent for treatment. If it were your priority, would you reverse that?

**JANET RENO:** What I think we've got to do, and I think I've made it clear, is, from my perspective, is we've got to look at the monies being spent for general interdiction and see how they can be spent more wisely in terms of prevention, education and treatment. Everyone that I've talked to thinks that we've got to improve our effort at education, prevention and treatment and I look forward to working with Dr. Lee Brown in terms of achieving a better balance.

**BILL MOYERS:** The President has called for 3.4 billion dollars over five years to pay for 50,000 new police officers. Now I've been reading a study by a criminologist, David H. Bayley, which says that increasing police visibility by hiring officers is governed by what he calls the ten-to-one rule. To get one officer on the street at all times, you have to hire ten. So if there's money to hire 50,000 new police, you, in effect, only get a new visible presence of 5,000 officers and that if these new policemen are doled out to every town and city in the country, you only get one or two more policemen in every town. Is that a cost of \$500,000 per policeman not \$50,000. So is that a cost efficient way of fighting crime?

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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**JANET RENO:** This is a program not just to put a police officer on the streets and make them visible, it's a program to enhance community policing throughout the United States.

**BILL MOYERS:** And by community policing you mean ?

**JANET RENO:** Community policing that involves the community, that helps the community address a problem and solves the problem. Let me give you an example, and I have seen similar examples that vary from community to community. We had a terrible problem in one of our communities at home -- drugs, crime, a prominent grocer was assassinated by drug dealers. We prosecuted the case, but I got to know the community over the years and I knew there were people that cared deeply about what was happening. Instead of top-downing the community and saying, "We're going to do this and this and this for you," we went to the community, police, the schools, we met at the schools, community leaders came in, neighborhood activists, and we talked with them and developed a plan for the community with them being the leaders and the guiders of that plan development. One of the keys to it was to address one of the more difficult areas and to use a community-friendly, highly respected police officer, a social worker, a public-health nurse and a community organizer, who came together as a full-time team. They started in a public housing development that the neighborhood chose -- not government -- and the whole purpose was to look at the problems of that neighborhood. There was a teenage gang there that was causing terrible problems. There were problems related to the public housing stock and its condition. They looked at it as a family, as a whole, of the health problems. They worked with women in trying to enable them to get off welfare. We started that a year ago April. By the week before Hurricane Andrew that program had been so successful that the police were talking about replicating it in other areas. Andrew devastated this particular area and so they became more reactive in the year that followed than proactive, but they're beginning to be more involved now and proactive efforts and they are being replicated. There are communities throughout the nation that had substantially reduced crime and prevented the crime and it was fascinating to watch how this police officer did it. He would go up to the juvenile court and say, "Your Honor, this young man must be punished. We have tried to work with him. We've done everything we can and he is a ring leader and he's influencing other younger kids in the area." But for others, they'd say, "Your Honor, let us take this kid and put him into an alternative program. We think we can work with him." They had so reduced crime, they had had such an impact on that gang, that I think that's an example of what community policing can do.

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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**BILL MOYERS:** Hasn't sentencing, in fact, become something of a farce, if not a fraud? I mean in Texas, my home state, the leap of the average sentence handed out has increased by a third, but the average stay in jail or prison has decreased by a third because the old inmates are let out in order to make room for the newcomers. That's a farce.

**JANET RENO:** Well that's what I've been talking about over the last 15 years. I used to write letters to everybody in the state saying, we do not have truth in sentencing -- what does as much to undermine public confidence in sentencing is the fact that they see somebody sentenced to ten years in prison and then they call me and say, "Janet, that guy you got sentenced, he's back out on the streets and it's only been three years." And I start checking. And the average sentence being served was only 20 to 30 percent of the sentence. We can't build our way out of the crime crisis, but we can be far more selective in identifying the truly dangerous and putting them away and developing a carrot and stick approach that enables others to come back to the community with a chance of success. But we've got to invest up front, because we will never have enough dollars if we wait until somebody is 28, been in prison for three years, has a drug problem, was neglected as a child. We can save some of those, but we would have a far better chance of saving that person if we'd prevented the problem in the first place.

**BILL MOYERS:** Why is it that in your own home state of Florida, murderers, rapists and robbers often serve less time than someone convicted of carrying a kilo of cocaine on a bus, who gets a mandatory 15 year sentence?

**JANET RENO:** One of the points that I've been trying to make to all concerned as I've come to Washington, is I came from a state that passed its sentencing guidelines in 1983, that's had minimum mandatory sentences for an awful long time, that threatened a lot of sentences but never provided the truth in sentencing -- and I come to a government where I see people serving ten years for a non-violent ... first offenders who were gofers in a drug deal, who did something terribly wrong and deserve to be punished, but I'd rather have the bad guys put away for a lot longer.

**BILL MOYERS:** Back in May, you ordered, in fact, a review of mandatory sentencing of minor drug offenders to see what effect they're having on the criminal justice system. Have you finished that yet?

**JANET RENO:** We expect to have it finished shortly.

**BILL MOYERS:** Any insights so far that you can share?

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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**JANET RENO:** That there are a significant number of people who are in that category of non-violent, first-offender, low-level participant in a drug deal, unarmed, no indication of danger and it is our hope that we can work with Congress and with everyone concerned to see if we can't use the carrot and stick approach on these people and make sure that we have an opportunity to get them back to the community as law abiding citizens.

**BILL MOYERS:** But the moment you begin to call for changing mandatory sentences in this climate, you're going to be accused of being soft on crime. Isn't that a problem that that rhetoric is now applied to people so that we cannot get to the fundamental reforms that we need.

**JANET RENO:** I think I may be able to serve a purpose. I'm not afraid to say it. This week I went to a Republican crime task force and talked about what I'm talking about with you. Unless we start talking common sense about crime, unless we get rid of the labels, unless we stop the buzz words -- of "throw away the key" or "hang them" or "soft on crime" or "too hard-nosed" -- unless we get rid of that and look at what works, we're never going to solve the problem and whenever I say this, whether it's to the National Sheriffs Organization, to prosecutors, to people throughout America, they get this big smile on their face and either applaud or smile like, "yeah, she's making a good point."

**BILL MOYERS:** Have you made that point in the White House?

**JANET RENO:** I'm trying to make that point to anybody and everybody I can.

**BILL MOYERS:** I ask because there had been some published reports, speculation, that the White House was unhappy when you suggested mandatory sentencing might be changed, that you were going to be perceived as being too liberal and too interested in social programs, that they might have, should have, put you over at Health and Human Services, not at Justice.

**JANET RENO:** Well ...

**BILL MOYERS:** Have they told you that?

**JANET RENO:** I've never been able to find quote, "mid-level" people at the White House that said that, but if they were, they were never a prosecutor in the pits in one of the most difficult jurisdictions for 15 years that didn't, that saw too many instances of lack of truth in sentencing, of people talking sentences, without following through, of the kids who came in with the whole fabric of society unwoven around them. The time has come

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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in America, on the crime issue, to stop talking liberal versus conservative, to stop talking tough or soft. It's time to start talking common sense.

**BILL MOYERS:** If I hear you, you are saying that the number of prisoners incarcerated today is a function of an irrational drug policy.

**JANET RENO:** I'm not saying that. I'm saying the number of prisoners and, and that, you've got to be careful, in terms of looking at what we do. Some of it doesn't relate to drugs because drugs and violence and teen pregnancy and youth gangs and this whole phenomena that we have seen -- this crisis that you describe -- I think are symptoms of a deeper problem in society and that is that, for too often, we've forgotten and neglected our children and it's just not a matter of children living in poverty. There are some middle-class children who are not supervised in the afternoon and in the evenings because people have not put children first. It is a problem throughout America. We're going to have to look at workplaces and figure out how we can enable parents to spend more time with their children. I've told the story of my mother. She worked in the home. She taught us so much. She taught us how to play fair. She spanked the living daylights out of us. She loved us with all of her heart and I've said, time and again, there is no child care in the world that will ever be the substitute for what that lady was in our life. If you'd told me I couldn't go to law school in 1960, I would have been furious and I would be even angrier now, but I think in a nation that can send a man to the moon and has developed all the technology that we have, we can continue to make profits and improve departments of justice and do good things professionally, while at the same time, freeing our parents time to be with their children to a greater extent than we do.

**BILL MOYERS:** Death penalty. You, you oppose it personally.

**JANET RENO:** Mhmm.

**BILL MOYERS:** On what grounds?

**JANET RENO:** I think that the whole purpose of the law is to value human life and, therefore, for the law to be involved in legally taking a person's life is inconsistent to me. I think all of punishment has the potential for being arbitrary -- the father who spanks two brothers, one brother says, "You spanked me harder than him." Well he can make up for it in the coming weeks with love and affection and kindness. The judge can sentence two people inequitably, but make up for it through pardon, clemency, parole or mitigation, but once that death penalty has been carried out, there is no way to make it up. I've always asked people who've applied for a position in my office as I interviewed them, "What's your position on the death penalty?" And it was fascinating to me, so many people were just thinking they were talking to a prosecutor, saying, "I'm for it."



## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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"Why?" And they couldn't articulate and here they were, wanted to be prosecutors and had been in law school for three years and others would kind of say, "Well, I'm against it." "Why?" And sometimes they didn't have any better answers. I think before government legally puts people to death, we ought to have a rational basis for doing it. Now some people suggest, "Well it's a deterrent and it deters other crime and it deters homicides." I have never seen a study that supports that and before we argue for the legal execution of people, we should have some sound judgement. There is only one reason I have ever understood viscerally, and that is vengeance. If somebody had come in while my mother was alive and killed her and I walked home and found them there, I would tear them apart from limb to limb, because vengeance is a personal reaction, but I don't think it's one that government can indulge in.

**BILL MOYERS:** But it does and it does so on a very, as you say, irrational basis. I mean 20,000 homicides a year, some 200 convicts from those arrested are selected for executions and then 20 to 30 are put to death, mainly in the old Confederacy, by the way. Can due process prevail in a system as spotty as that?

**JANET RENO:** I will always remember for as long as I live, a case that will haunt me for all of my life. It was the case of James Joseph Richardson, a man prosecuted, convicted and sentenced to death 21 years ago, or now 22 or 23 years ago, for the poisoning death of his seven children in Arcadia, Florida. He didn't go to the electric chair, because the Supreme Court set aside the death penalty, but he spent 21 years in prison. Many people believe that the evidence was insufficient to charge him and he is now free and a free man living in the community. But the awesome power to charge has got to be carried out with abundant attention to due process. I think one of the most important things is to make sure that our process works right, whether it be the death penalty or any kind of sentence.

**BILL MOYERS:** How do you square your personal, strong, I can sense, strong personal convictions about the death penalty with the fact that as a prosecutor, as a public official, you, you carried capital cases to their ultimate end.

**JANET RENO:** I square it with the fact that I could be, as a prosecutor in Dade County, I could be sure of guilt to the extent that a human being could be. I could make sure that it was not discriminatorily applied in any way. I could try to do everything I could to make sure that due process was fully adhered to and that there are things that my government does that I sometimes do not agree with.

## **BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"**

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**BILL MOYERS:** Do you believe the death penalty is color blind, that it's indifferent to whether a prisoner is black or white? I ask that because while half of all murder victims in the U.S. are black, 84 percent of the inmates on death row are there for killing a white and to my knowledge only one white person has been executed for the killing of a black man in the last 47 years. Is it...?

**JANET RENO:** You will still see some skewing because the criminal justice system is too often the institution at the end of the line after other systems have failed, but I think it is imperative that all of us involved in the criminal justice system try to develop procedures that will make us be able to test whether we are treating black, white, and minority offenders the same in situations similarly situated.

**BILL MOYERS:** The Supreme Court, led by the conservatives, has been whittling away at the right of prisoners to appeal their death sentences, making it much more difficult for them to obtain Federal court judicial review, through habeas corpus. Has the Court gone too far?

**JANET RENO:** I think it's important that we insure proper counsel standards so that people are properly protected in this whole process. I think it is very important and I feel very, very strongly that with an actual claim of innocence, based on information it couldn't have been discovered, where somebody can clearly show that they were innocent, that that's got to be able to be raised.

**BILL MOYERS:** But the court wants to do it in less time rather than more time and since the Federal court oversight is our last protection against unjust punishment -- shouldn't we give them as much opportunity as possible?

**JANET RENO:** I think one of the reasons that -- for both for the defendant who sits there forever as the process drags out and for the public that watches interminable judicial processes that are never brought to an end -- that we can make our whole process much more prompt, and that we can ensure far greater due process, and adherence to sound counsel standards.

**BILL MOYERS:** There's a published report that President Clinton will nominate for Federal judgeships some people who have opposed abortion. Do you support him on that position knowing that it will cause a lot of people to think they voted for the wrong man last November?

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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**JANET RENO:** I think you have to look at appointments to the judiciary without a litmus test, without damning it to say how they would vote on certain issues and you have to look to the excellence, to the diversity, to the judicial temperament and I think that's what he is trying to do.

**BILL MOYERS:** He told me ...

**JANET RENO:** I think ...

**BILL MOYERS:** ... last year, by the way, in an interview while he was running, that he supported a litmus test on abortion for appointees to the Supreme Court. Do you go along with that?

**JANET RENO:** I think again, that it's important that we look for the best people for the job and obviously as he considers who is the best people for the job, he's going to be looking at it, particularly as the situation exists on the Supreme Court. But I think what he is looking for -- he told me that first night that I talked with him in the Oval office -- is excellence and diversity and judicial temperament.

**BILL MOYERS:** Have you decided whether or not to order a Federal investigation into the riots that occurred two years ago in Crown Heights, Brooklyn?

**JANET RENO:** We have already investigated. We have, again, taken steps to make sure that we leave no stone unturned in terms of the investigation involving all the situations around Crown Heights and I want to make sure that I carefully consider everything and make the best judgement possible independent of any outside, extraneous influence.

**BILL MOYERS:** The tension between the Jews and the Blacks there is so great, that many people in New York, including The New York Times, outsiders like Senator Bob Dole, think that only a Federal investigation will put an end to those tensions whether or not there's an indictment.

**JANET RENO:** Well, my experience in Miami is that the most thorough investigations in the world, whether or not they're indictments, don't put an end to tensions. What puts an end to tensions are people talking together and working together. We have got to make sure that our investigation is as thorough and complete as possible, and I'm trying to do that, and then we have got to make a decision based on that investigation as to whether the evidence is sufficient under the law to charge. And that's what I've got to try to do, and I'm dedicated to doing that.

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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**BILL MOYERS:** Will you do that by the election next month, for the mayoralty? Because the New York Times has suggested that the White House is putting pressure on you to back off of the case because they don't want to impair David Dinkins' chances of being reelected.

**JANET RENO:** Well if that were the case, then I would have backed off on the case a long time ago. One of the things that I've learned from 15 years in Miami, and now -- people want you to do an awful lot of things. They want you to charge or not charge. They say this or that based on politics, and then they used to threaten to go to the Miami Herald, and I'd write out the phone number for the Miami Herald and I'd say, "Here's the phone number for the Miami Herald. You go call them. Tell them what you think of me. Get them to editorialize against me. You go tell all those people to vote against me and when you want to come back and talk about the evidence of the law, come right on back 'cause that's the way I'm going to decide it."

**BILL MOYERS:** Will you decide whether to pursue an investigation before the election?

**JANET RENO:** We have conducted an investigation and there are questions that have been raised and we are trying to conduct the most thorough investigation possible so that we leave no stone unturned.

**BILL MOYERS:** Will you issue your report then before the election?

**JANET RENO:** I don't know 'cause I don't know what I'll find.

**BILL MOYERS:** Another hot potato. Iraqgate, the role of the Italian bank in Atlanta that reputedly helped Saddam Hussein get billions of dollars in foreign aid during the Bush administration. The Justice Department has allowed the bank to plead -- to cop a plea on three minor counts out of several hundred counts, which has the effect, as the press has been saying, of making it very difficult to get at further revelations in what could be a big political scandal. Why did you make that decision?

**JANET RENO:** First of all, I think it's a little bit incorrect, as has been reported, and I really don't want to discuss it because the matter is still pending. Christopher Drogoul pled, and he will be sentenced, and, as we have said consistently, this does not foreclose any investigation and we are currently pursuing investigations with respect to all the related matters.

## BILL MOYERS' JOURNAL: "JANET RENO"

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**BILL MOYERS:** The judge down there who's been hearing the case says, "Where there's smoke, there's fire and I think the house is burning." He sees the possibility of a wider conspiracy involving the United States government, the government, other governments around the world. And Bill Safire of The New York Times, a Republican himself, has suggested there may be collusion or that George Bush and Bill Clinton may be in cahoots on this. George Bush remaining silent in criticizing Bill Clinton and Bill Clinton deciding not to pursue a special prosecutor to investigate this case because of that collusion.

**JANET RENO:** There's no reason for me to pursue a special prosecutor because I didn't have any connection with the Bush administration and have no allegiance to the Bush administration. I am pursuing all of those claims, as I have said, so I don't know of any great conspiracy, and I'm going to do the same thing I've said I'm going to do on the others. I'm going to act based on the evidence in the law and do it as thoroughly as I can.

**BILL MOYERS:** Have you ruled out the possibility of a special prosecution?

**JANET RENO:** I don't see any need for a special prosecutor since I have no conflict of interest with the Bush administration and furthermore, the Independent counsel statute has sunsetted, so it has not been reenacted and I would not have that remedy if it were appropriate, available.

**BILL MOYERS:** Have you had any pressure from the White House on this?

**JANET RENO:** None whatsoever.

**BILL MOYERS:** Thank you very much, Janet Reno.

**JANET RENO:** Thank you.

**BILL MOYERS V/O:** From Washington, this has been a conversation with Attorney General Janet Reno. I'm Bill Moyers.

--- END OF TRANSCRIPT ---