



# Department of Justice

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REMARKS  
BY

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BEFORE  
THE

71ST ANNUAL DEPARTMENT CONVENTION  
THE AMERICAN LEGION

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As Americans, We need to be continually reminded that what we can achieve depends ultimately on us -- we the American people -- and above all on what's important to us.

It depends on the particular structure of values each of us brings to the challenge of living and working together.

As Attorney General, I am most aware of the proud fact that we are "a government of laws and not of men", a characterization that makes us unique among the nations of the world -- past and present -- and that we depend on the rule of law to govern this nation.

But Lately, I've had a chance to reflect not just on the rule of law but on the role of law -- on what our laws by themselves can do and what they cannot.

And on the importance of some of those things upon which enforcement of the law depends so heavily, but that are beyond its reach.

In particular, I've found myself thinking a lot about the relationship between our laws and our values.

Sometimes we think of laws and values as the same. They're related, but they're not the same.

We establish laws to codify certain rules and standards that allow us to live together peacefully as a free people.

But it's our values that inspire our laws, not our laws that establish our values. Laws tell us what we must do. Values summon us to what we should do.

The better we maintain our values, the less we need to resort to the law. And it's those values we choose to live by that define our civilization.

Kindness...compassion...decency...generosity...these all are deeply ingrained in the American spirit.

So, too, is a rigorous sense of justice and fair play.

We Americans are indeed touched by "the better angels of our nature." When we see someone in trouble, we rush to respond. When we see someone in need, we open our hearts and our pocketbooks.

As Americans, we believe in freedom. We believe in opportunity. We believe in the inherent rights and dignity of every individual.

We believe in the capacity of the arts and culture to liberate the spirit and elevate the mind.

We believe that the environment we live in is God's gift to us and our trust for the next generation.

We believe in the mutual respect and mutual restraint that allows each of us to live in freedom secure in our lives and our homes.

We believe in the symbol of our flag, and the substance of the ideals that it represents. As you who have fought for it know: This love and respect cannot be compromised, but neither can those freedoms that our flag proudly represents.

When I think of the values that are important to me, I'd sum it up this way:

- \* Religion, for the soul.
- \* Education, for the mind.
- \* Arts, for the spirit.
- \* Family, for the love and nurture that every human needs.
- \* Freedom, because it's God's gift and man's achievement.

And how do these values translate themselves into our everyday activities?

- \* In the economy -- through enterprise, opportunity, risk, and reward.
- \* In the community -- through a decent regard for the rights and feelings of others.
- \* In politics -- through a vigorous debate, then a closing of ranks as we accept the people's verdict and get on with the people's business.
- \* And, always, through the rule of law, reflecting all those values which we hold dear.

But different times pose new and different challenges to both our laws and our values. Let me give you a simple example of how they interact in today's America.

Many of us grew up in a simpler time when we didn't even lock our doors at night. We didn't have to.

Now in some of our great cities people double and triple lock their doors, even in the daytime.

Is it the law that's failed? I suggest not.

Too many people today seem to have a warped internal guidance mechanism. Somewhere along the way they haven't acquired the kinds of moral restraints that are essential in a civilized community.

True, the values that define America were forged in those harsh colonial winters so many years ago. But each generation has had to fight to maintain them.

It's sometimes easy to forget that, in this exciting and fast-moving world, that there is a constant battle over which sets of values will prevail.

Let me illustrate by reference to two of these battles raging today.

They are the wars against drugs and terrorism.

Between them, they command an enormous share of attention, both here and abroad.

But in neither one will the forces of law, alone, be enough.

Both get down, ultimately, to struggles of the spirit and to a contest over those basic values that are so precious to free men and women.

The war against drugs affects every one of our communities. In it, law enforcement, of course has a vital role.

We can be and, to be sure, are unrelenting in our efforts to put drug dealers behind bars.

But as long as enough people are willing to pay exorbitant prices for illegal drugs, others will risk prison or even vicious inner city crossfire to try to make themselves rich by supplying the demand.

So we'll fight the drug war with all the law enforcement resources at our disposal.

But let's not fool ourselves. The only way to win it, conclusively, is on the battlefield of values. And on that battlefield, we're truly engaged in a struggle for the soul of the next generation.

We'll win the war on drugs when changes in values force drugs go out of fashion.

When the yuppie on the move no longer thinks it's hip to score from the corner supplier on his lunch hour.

When drug-using rock stars and athletes cease being popular idols.

When, in the inner city school, the dealer with his gold chains and flashy car becomes an outcast rather than a role model for impressionable kids.

This struggle will not be decided in the courtroom, but in the classroom, in the workplace, in our houses of worship, in the community and, yes, in the family.

That's where it will be won because the struggle is not over laws, but over values. The values of self respect and

self-reliance and, above all, of the integrity of the individual mind and spirit, functioning as God designed them to function.

And this will require leadership from all levels of our national life -- especially at those levels closest to the people themselves -- law enforcement officials, to be sure, but also teachers, religious leaders, union and business leaders, elected officials, leaders in great organizations like the American Legion and, yes, every single parent in this nation.

Without their combined efforts, we could lose the war on drugs and the whole next generation dependent upon our fulfilling this commitment.

The fight against terrorism is also a fight over values. Terrorists do on a global scale what drug cartels and violent gangs do in many of our cities.

But there's an important difference. Drug dealers kill for money. Terrorists kill for a cause.

This makes the terrorist in many ways more dangerous and more difficult to deal with. He's driven not by greed but by zealotry.

And he confronts us directly on the field of values -- his versus ours.

His cause versus our belief that, whatever the cause, a civilized world must enforce certain decent limits on what can be done to advance it.

I have met with leaders from other countries engaged in this struggle and we agree that there is a lot that governments working together can do toward stamping out terrorism.

By sharing our intelligence and training techniques we can stop many terrorists before they strike. We can catch others after they strike.

But to put an end to terrorism, in the final analysis, we have to put that, too, out of fashion. We have to win -- again -- the contest of values.

Many of you've paid the price, on the fields of foreign wars -- to reaffirm our freedom. The times may have been different, the places on every continent and sea, but the values are essentially the same.

My friends, we can't live together in freedom unless we live in mutual respect, and with mutual restraint and mutual forbearance, with decency and civility and a readiness to see things from the other person's point of view.

In a community of a hundred people, it takes a hundred to keep the peace, but only one to break it.

It takes a ready force and firmness to make freedom secure. It takes the stalwart commitment of young men and women in uniform around the world to maintain this freedom.

It takes the belief that we must be ready to defend these basic values against those who would deny us the freedoms that sacrifice has produced.



To achieve the "kinder, gentler America" sought by our President, it's going to take the force of values as well as the force of law, the force of will, to be sure, but the force of reason and the force of example as well.

Hard work, risk and reward, the drive of the entrepreneur, the vision of the inventor, and yes, the dreams of the poet -- these are what America is built of. The strong sense of duty of those who have fought and sometimes died to make us free.

We will win these battles, at home and abroad, because we must win them.

And the whole history of America is that what we must do, we do.

But it's going to take more than police, more than law enforcement, more than military might.

Above all, it's going to require our unstinting commitment to the values that have made us what we are.

Values that begin with the individual, that are nurtured in the family, and sustained in the community.

Our challenge is to see that the hard won freedoms paid for on a hundred battlefields, from Lexington to Gettysburg, from the Argonne to Iwo Jima, from Inchon to Viet Nam, are sustained and that our values of freedom and peace prevail, now and forever.

Thank you.