

SAMPLE SPEECH

The sample speech reflects the 2000 NCVRW theme and offers a broad national perspective about the current status of victims' rights and services. It should be personalized to reflect local issues and concerns, as well as to educate the public about victims' rights and services available in the community in which the speech is delivered. Potential audiences for NCVRW speeches include: civic organizations; allied professional groups; schools, colleges and universities (classes, general assemblies, and student/faculty organizations); criminal and juvenile justice and victims' rights conferences; and religious institutions.

For more information about federally-funded victim service programs, you may wish to visit the Office for Victims of Crime homepage on the Internet at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/>.

NOTABLE QUOTABLES

This Resource Guide contains a variety of quotations that address the NCVRW theme and other salient issues relevant to victims' rights and victim justice. The "notable quotables" can be utilized in speeches, brochures, and all public outreach publications and activities sponsored during NCVRW and throughout the year.

SAMPLE SERMON

Supporters from the faith community for NCVRW can greatly enhance public outreach efforts. Many faith leaders are willing to incorporate messages relevant to victims' rights and services in order to commemorate NCVRW. Victim service providers should contact religious leaders at least six weeks prior to NCVRW to determine if they are willing to address crime victims' rights and needs in their sermons on Sunday, April 9, 2000.

Sample Speech

As we join together this week to commemorate the 20th anniversary of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, it's a special time to reflect upon the many contributions that crime victims and those who serve them have made to our community, and to our nation. It's our seven days to bring honor to those who bring honor to victims, 365 days a year, night and day, with little thought to the personal sacrifice involved in helping others heal.

This year's theme, "Dare to Dream," is fitting in that it reflects the hopes and aspirations that form the very foundation of America's victims' rights discipline: a shared dream for the day when *all victims* will be involved and informed throughout the criminal and juvenile justice systems; a shared hope that *no victims* will ever be blamed for the horrible crimes that were committed against them; and shared aspirations for a society that puts "helping crime victims" at the top of the priority list of social justice. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." I guess, then, that *the future belongs to us*, because there is no dream more beautiful than that of *true victim justice*.

The dream of victim justice is rapidly becoming reality in communities large and small, urban and rural, in the far reaches of our nation. And yet, this reality did *not* happen overnight. There was nothing accidental about this reality. Victim justice is a direct result of thousands of individuals—

many whose lives were irrevocably changed by the trauma of victimization, and countless others who believe victim assistance is the noblest cause they can fight for. If you go to Washington, D.C. and look in awe at the front of the Archives Building, there engraved in marble is the inscription: "Past is prologue." In the victims' rights discipline, it is indeed *our past* that has led us to a new millennium full of *hope* for victims, and *help* for individuals and communities who have been hurt by crime.

For example, two decades ago, a small yet determined group of victims and advocates in Wisconsin threw caution to the wind, and passed the very first Victims' Bill of Rights that provided broad participatory rights for victims of crime. In 1984, the power of the personal story of two mothers whose children were killed by drunk drivers helped convince our nation that drunk driving was not merely *an accident*, but a *violent crime*. In 1986, a group of determined victims and advocates gathered together to dare to dream of constitutional protections of victims' rights, elevating the rights of crime victims to those afforded to accused and convicted offenders. That dream is rapidly becoming a reality: 32 states [*including yours, if applicable*] now have

state-level constitutional amendments on the books, and a federal amendment for victims of crime is currently pending in the U.S. Congress.

[Insert an optional paragraph that pays tribute to individuals and agencies in your state or community who, in the past twenty years, have “dared to dream” and made a difference]

Our collective *dreams* of victim justice are built upon the painful realization of the *nightmares* that crime has wreaked on our fellow Americans, our homes, our neighborhoods, our schools, and our communities:

- The nightmare of a child sexual abuse victim who has been molested and threatened, who feels she has nowhere to turn, who at the age of five, feels helpless and hopeless.
- The nightmare of the battered woman whose life is marred by shame and blame, who feels responsible for the violence she endures because we, as a nation, have just recently begun to place the blame for domestic violence where it rightfully belongs: on the violent batterer.
- The nightmare of the survivors of homicide victims whose losses are immeasurable, and who feel such a tremendous obligation to stand up for the rights of their loved ones, who are no longer here to stand up for their rights.
- The nightmare of the many victims of elder abuse, whose golden years are tarnished by abuse, neglect, violence and degradation—often at the hands of a family member.
- And the nightmare of communities such as Oklahoma City and Littleton, whose collective tragedy simply shatters the human psyche, and whose collective grief has changed the way our nation views the victimization of entire communities.

Yes, we can and should continue to dream of a world that is fair and just, a world in which *all victims* are treated with compassion and dignity. At the same time, we should reflect on the wisdom of Eugene Ionesco who said, “Ideologies separate us. Dreams and anguish bring us together.” Because together, in America’s victims’ rights discipline, we have seen triumph emerge from tragedy. We are beginning to see a sense of hope emerge from a sense of helplessness.

During National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, as we reflect on the positive differences that individuals have made here in [your community] and across the nation, we must ask ourselves “What can *I* do to make a difference? What can *I* dare to dream?” While each of our answers may vary, let me offer some suggestions for what *one person* can do to help victims of crime:

- If you know of a crime that has occurred, report it. Because every time we fail to report a criminal or juvenile offense, that offender remains free to harm others.

- If you know of somebody who has been hurt by crime, be there to support him or her, not just in the hours and days after the victimization, but for the long run. The support you provide may be just the link that a victim needs to begin the painful process of recovery.
- Volunteer for victims. [*Offer specific examples of agencies that need assistance.*]
- Let us know your ideas for making our homes and schools and communities safer. If you dare to dream of a [*city or county or state*] that is committed to public safety, our collective security will be enhanced.

If, as Henry David Thoreau said, “Dreams are the touchstones of our character,” then our communal character of *concern* and *caring* for victims of crime will speak volumes about us as individuals, as a community, and as a nation. If we *dare to dream* of a world that is free from violence, and filled with supportive services for those who have been touched by crime, it is the first step in making that dream a reality. Perhaps most important, please remember that *every time* you help a victim in need, and *every time* you take the time to assist somebody who is hurting, you are, indeed, doing our community *justice*.

Notable Quotables

“Dare to Dream” Theme Quotations

Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken bird that cannot fly. *Langston Hughes*

Dreams are the touchstones of our character. *Henry David Thoreau*

The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams. *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Ideologies separate us. Dreams and anguish bring us together. *Eugene Ionesco*

Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.
Henry David Thoreau

Throw your dreams into space like a kite, and you do not know what it will bring back: a new life, a new friend, a new love, a new country. *Anais Nin*

Without change, something sleeps inside us, and seldom awakens. The sleeper must awaken.
Frank Herbert

Additional Inspirational Quotations

If we do not maintain justice, justice will not maintain us. *Francis Bacon*

Whenever a separation is made between liberty and justice, neither, in my opinion, is safe.
Edmund Burke

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted; the indifference of those who should have known better; the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most; that has made it possible for evil to triumph. *Unknown*

Remember, people will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold, but so does a hard-boiled egg. *Anonymous*

Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. *Albert Einstein*

Without a struggle, there can be no progress. *Frederick Douglass*

The harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives everything its value. *Thomas Paine*

We must learn to live together as brothers (and sisters), or perish together as fools. *Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Without a sense of caring, there can be no sense of community. *Anthony J. D'Angelo*

I cannot say whether things will get better if we change; what I can say is they must change if they are to get better. *G. C. Lichtenberg*

You must be the change you wish to see in the world. *Mahatma Gandhi*

None of us knows what the next change is going to be, what unexpected opportunity is just around the corner, waiting a few months or a few years to change all the tenor of our lives. *Kathleen Norris*

Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there. *Will Rogers*

You get the best out of others when you give the best of yourself. *Harry Firestone*

There are no shortcuts to any place worth going. *Anonymous*

It is no use saying, "We are doing our best." You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary. *Winston Churchill*

When you get to the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on! *Franklin D. Roosevelt*

Sample Sermon

The joy of the Lord is your strength! —Nehemiah 8:10

Today marks the beginning of National Crime Victims' Rights Week, which is a week set aside each year to honor and commemorate victims of crime and those who provide services to victims. This year's theme for the week is "Dare to Dream." It is a fitting theme for commemorating crime victims during a year that marks a brand new century, as we come together as people of God *daring to dream* that all victims of crime can find the healing and restoration they so desperately need from us, our families, our communities, and our justice system.

All of us have been touched by crime at one point or another in our lives. Perhaps you yourself have been a victim of crime. Perhaps a member of your family, or someone you love, has been victimized. Crime has become part of the very fabric of our society and our lives. At times, it feels like there is very little we can do to stop the seemingly endless onslaught of cruel and even unspeakable crimes . . . teenagers killing one another and themselves, elderly people physically and emotionally abused by trusted relatives and caregivers, honest individuals cheated out of their life savings by fraudulent schemes, pure and innocent children betrayed by those people who should cherish them the most. It is so hard to think about, and sometimes we just can't. What can we do to stop this endless onslaught? What would God have us do about a problem that is so big, so widespread, so unmanageable?

The hard truth is that it *is* a huge problem with no easy answers. But for those of us specifically called to this work, or simply called to displaying compassion and understanding for the needs of victims of crime, we are not alone. God makes a habit of calling us to help each other, of daring us to dream that we can make a difference. The God who imparts in us the vision—the dream—to show love for one another wants us to dare to dream and then dare to act.

The story of Nehemiah is a powerful and empowering illustration of the great things that can be accomplished by those who dare to believe in the dreams to which they are called. After the third captivity of the Jewish people, Nehemiah was instrumental in leading them back to Jerusalem, only to find the walls and gates of the city destroyed and lying in rubble. Deeply troubled, Nehemiah turned to God in prayer and received in answer a great vision of a rebuilt Jerusalem. While most around him scoffed and criticized his plan for restoration of the walls, Nehemiah gathered some loyal workers and set to work. He realized that his burning dream was not enough to accomplish his goal—it would require careful planning, arduous work and extreme sacrifice. Throughout the fifty-two days that it took to rebuild the walls, the team of workers and volunteers

faced countless obstacles and a lack of community support, but Nehemiah remained focused, not on the overwhelming problems and dangers, but rather on the vision he had been given by God. This was his foundation, his strength. He never lost sight of his dream, his vision of Jerusalem restored to its rightful and original glory.

There are significant parallels between Nehemiah's story and the experience of crime victims. Victims who are senselessly and brutally victimized by crime face the almost overwhelming task of rebuilding the walls of their lives—walls that have maintained their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well-being. For a long time, our country promoted a system of justice in which the constitutional rights of offenders were justifiably safeguarded, but unfortunately were also given more weight and importance than the rights of their innocent victims. Thirty years ago, victims did not enjoy the rights within the criminal and juvenile justice systems that they do today. They had no right to have input into criminal proceedings, or receive restitution for the harm they suffered, or simply speak about the impact the crime had upon them at the sentencing of the offender. But today, after countless hard-fought battles, inspired by unspeakable injustice and senseless tragedy after tragedy, we are, as a country, as neighborhoods, as faith communities, beginning to see and understand our obligation to victims and the essential role we can play in helping them restore and rebuild the walls of their lives.

Look around you and you will see that the work of rebuilding and restoration lies everywhere—in the neighborhoods decimated by gang violence and warfare, in the school communities that have been instantaneously and irrevocably altered by incomprehensible acts of violence, in the families torn apart by homicide, in the children who are abandoned, neglected, subjected to untold abuse. It *is* daunting to think that somehow we can make a difference for victims of crime. But just as Nehemiah painstakingly rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, brick by brick, stone by stone, so too have victims and those who serve them worked, step by step, to secure better services, more comprehensive rights and some measure of healing and justice.

In some way, big or small, God calls each of us to care for each other. There is a vision that each of us can dare to dream. This dream may be any number of things, from public service to caring for our own families. But this week, let us consider in a meaningful way, perhaps for the very first time, the ways in which we can dare to dream that victims of crime can be embraced and encircled within our communities and given the rights, support and services they need to rebuild the walls that have been torn down by victimization. Let us share our dreams with those whose dreams may be shattered. Let us, like Nehemiah, dare to dream that the insurmountable *can* be achieved, that we *can* make a difference in our neighborhoods, our communities. In opening ourselves to God's call in our lives, let us dare to believe that He will give us the strength and the courage to make our own unique contribution to the work of

rebuilding—rebuilding the walls, rebuilding the dreams, rebuilding the gates to true justice and restoration for victims of crime.