

*Remarks to the
MS Advisory Committee, U.S. Commission on Civil Rights
October 9, 2002*

Senator Harden, Mr. Jenkins – thank you for your work to make this meeting possible and your commitment to the civil rights of all Mississippians and all Americans. To those who serve on the Mississippi Advisory Committee, thank you for your participation and dedication to your role.

I recognize there's work to be done in Mississippi with regard to human relations, but I believe that we are not unique in that position. Every state, and every nation, has work to do in human relations.

We all want the same thing – a good job, a safe place to live and raise a family, the opportunity to achieve our goals and dreams. Those are basic human desires.

Unfortunately, obstacles come up in the pursuit of those desires – and we have an obligation to work together to remove those obstacles. Our national constitution speaks to that obligation – the basic right of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Mississippi has made progress in meeting that obligation. The sacrifices made by so many during the 60's have borne fruit. Look at the celebration held last week to mark the 40th anniversary of desegregation of the University of Mississippi. Look at the number of African-American elected officials, at every level of government. Look at the ever-growing numbers of minority business leaders.

When assertions of discrimination are made, they receive a higher scrutiny here than anywhere else. We are sensitive to those assertions, and I believe they are dealt with in an open and public manner that has helped us move forward.

I appreciate the work you are doing with this Committee, and I look forward to the findings of this meeting. I have always felt the mindset of “I must do something” accomplishes much more than the mindset of “something must be done.”

We’ve do so much here in Mississippi. We’ve done something, and it has made this state stronger than ever before.

Thank you.