

*Remarks for the
Japan-America Society of Mississippi
May 2, 2002*

Good evening. This is an exciting time for Mississippi. Efforts such as the creation of the Japan America Society of Mississippi, that bring people together from different background and cultures, continue to help us broaden our economy worldwide.

I wanted to be here tonight because the timing of this opening meeting could not have been better planned. I will be leaving next week to conduct a business development mission to Japan to meet with existing and prospective investors.

I would like to recognize Consul General Mitamura for his support for the creation of the Mississippi Chapter of the Japan America Society, and also for his support for our upcoming trip to Japan. I would also like to recognize Mr. Hiro Hosokawa from JETRO (The Japan External Trade Organization) for his efforts to promote trade between Mississippi and Japan.

Early today I participated in the official opening of the Mississippi World Trade Center.

It is my desire to see the WTC work hand and hand with the MS Chapter of the Japan America Society to foster mutual goals of expanded educational, cultural and business ties between Mississippi and Japan.

I would like to thank Phillip Pierce and Ms. Kazuko White for having the vision to make this idea a reality in Mississippi. I would also like to commend you for having a cross section of business, academic, government and community leaders on your board of directors.

Mississippi is moving ahead in its efforts to expand business opportunities with Japan.

Mississippi's exports to Japan totaled \$68 million in 2001. Japan is Mississippi's 12th largest trading partner. Major exports include chemicals, woodpulp, electrical machinery, wood products and furniture. Major exporters are ChemFirst, Peavey Electronics and Sunshine Mills.

At the present time, there are 22 Japanese owned companies doing business in Mississippi, including our newest partner, Nissan.

I cannot overstate the importance of Nissan's commitment to Mississippi. Nissan's investment of 930 million dollars is expected to create 4,000 new jobs in the state.

This investment has raised Mississippi's profile in global market. We are working diligently to expand the Nissan supplier network to create quality jobs for Mississippi.

Our ties to Japan were strengthened two years ago by the establishment of the Mississippi Asian Investment Promotion Office in Yokohama, Japan. The people working in this office are constantly promoting the state and what we have to offer in terms of products, places and people.

Mississippi universities across the state are actively leading the challenge of globalization. Mississippi colleges and universities are actively engaged in student and executive exchange programs around the world.

For example, the University of Southern Mississippi has a longstanding relationship with Kaetsu University in Tokyo. The University of Mississippi is expanding its ties with Japan through the Croft Institute.

Mississippi State University, in partnership with the Nissan Research Center, has established the Center for Advanced Vehicular Studies (CAVS); this center will also work with Jackson State University.

And, Holmes Community College and Hinds Community College are playing active roles in providing for industrial and technical training for Nissan.

There is so much happening between Mississippi and Japan. It is an exciting time for us all, and I appreciate the role to be played by the Mississippi Chapter of the Japan-America Society. Good luck, and thank you for inviting me to be a part of this historic occasion.