

*Remarks for the
Minority Business Enterprise Division Conference
September 18, 2002*

(recognize Bob Rohrlack, other dignitaries)

It is great to be here this morning, and I want to welcome all of you to this conference. There are a lot of great things happening through the MDA's Minority Business Enterprise Division, and I want to recognize too the good work of Gennie Lacy Jones and her staff.

The focus of this symposium is on "The Entrepreneurial Economy."

That's an apt description of where we are operating today – in the state, national and global marketplaces.

At every level, the constantly changing dynamics of the economy demand creative thinking, innovative planning, and a little bit of risk-taking. But, the rewards of meeting these demands can be great.

In the face of a national recession, we're busy creating jobs in Mississippi.

Nearly 36,000 new jobs have been created in the past two years, and 17,000 of those have come through the expansion of existing businesses. The latest figures from the Mississippi Development Authority show that, just from the beginning of this year, 133 businesses have announced expansions that will generate over 4,500 new jobs.

Look at the Nissan plant for a moment – here's a world-class company investing more than \$1.5 billion in our state to build a facility, over 2 million square feet in size, that will produce 400,000 cars a year and employ more than 5,000 people.

Minority contractors are playing a major role in this project, many serving at the level of Tier One suppliers. Andrew Jenkins and AJA South Star Transport will be a lifeline between suppliers and the main factory. Charles Doty and Lextron will be building cockpit modules. Bill Cooley and Toni Cooley with Systems Consultants Associates will work with PPG Industries to provide primer for body frames.

Training programs have been developed between Nissan and MDA to help minority contractors strengthen their own skills within the automotive industry and better prepare themselves to take advantage of opportunities.

And, there's so much more that's being done – and so many more companies that are growing along with us.

I'm proud of the work that's been done by the Mississippi Development Authority and the Minority Business Enterprise Division to encourage minority businesses to take on the challenge of these demands and turn them into opportunities.

I agree with the old saying that the challenges of hard work affect people in different ways – some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all.

None of us here today – from the State of Mississippi to the single businessman growing his company – is afraid of turning up our sleeves. We know there's no other option to consider.

There are some great stories coming out of Mississippi these days. I appreciate your contributions to those stories and the work that's still to be done.

Thank you.