

**Gulfport Job Corps Center
Commencement Address
Friday, July 21, 2000
2:30 p.m.**

Good Afternoon.

What an honor it is for me to share this special occasion with you. Governor Musgrove has asked me to convey his apologies for not being here this afternoon.

You will find that the education you have achieved is one of the only things that no one can ever take away from you. You have achieved an education that will serve you well.

It is our job to provide you with an environment that fosters economic growth and stability in this state. It is a goal of Governor Musgrove's administration to change the status quo, and not accept the problems of the past.

The Governor and our Legislators have now made a commitment to bring teacher pay to the Southeastern average. This commitment will allow more teachers to live, work and raise their families in this state. It is also a goal to create an environment that will spur economic growth, providing more higher-paying jobs and keeping Mississippi's best and brightest right here in Mississippi.

It is what you do with your education that will define the person you become, and the impact that you will make on your community, state and nation.

As you enter the market place, you will put your education to the test. We recognize that a strong educational system and a qualified workforce benefit not only you, but all of the people of Mississippi.

Just as your success depends on maintaining a level of commitment and your ability to continue to grow and learn, our success in Mississippi depends on maintaining a commitment to provide opportunity to everyone across this state through education and training.

In the past few months, the Mississippi Department of Economic and Community Development has been working on efforts to reconstruct Mississippi's objectives of attracting and growing business and industry in our state.

We know that we must have a coherent agenda for advancing our state economically. We have relied on outdated economic plans. We have used stale incentives and we have wondered why better-paying jobs pass our people by.

We have a strong economy. We have a workforce that is getting better and better. We have the resources! We have the potential!

Realizing it was time for us to create a new plan that provides solutions, we have established the first ever Mississippi Partnership for Economic Development, a coalition of Mississippi's public and private sector

leadership. The partnership is being co-chaired by Governor Musgrove and Mr. Dwight Evans, President and CEO of Mississippi Power Company.

The plan will be extensive and includes a variety of factors.

One of the goals of the plan will be to bring competitive paying jobs to our state that will keep Mississippi's best and brightest students in our state to build their homes, build their families and build a quality of life that is second to none.

We know that a large part of attracting industry to Mississippi is having a strong educational system.

We must provide our students with a strong academic background, a broad-base education and the practical training our workforce requires, if Mississippi is to compete with other states in the future.

We need to bring companies to Mississippi who can pay our people competitive salaries.

We must enhance and improve our schools so that we can create economic growth.

The two most important factors companies consider when relocating to a new area are:

1. A trained and qualified workforce.

2. A good educational system to raise their children and provide an educated workforce for the future.

Any plan that we have to boost economic development in Mississippi that does not address improving our schools is hollow, which is why education is a key factor in the Governor's economic plan.

Your QUALITY OF LIFE depends greatly on your education. You may ask, what is quality of life? Quality of life is about feeling good and being satisfied with things in general. Quality of life is about fulfilling the societal and cultural demands for material wealth, social status and physical well being. You may now be wondering how can I achieve a better quality of life for my family and myself? Stay in school and get an education is the answer.

Obtaining an education will enable you to become more efficient and to achieve the legitimate goals of your life. You may have a good life now, but it can always be a little better. Everyone can become a little more educated, in order to make a better life for themselves. An education can include many things: completing high school, going to a community college, attending a university or learning a skill or trade. Any of these options will help you become more successful in your future. You become more valuable as an employee, when you have more to offer your employer. You become more valuable as a business, when you have more to offer your clients.

An education will train you for quick, effective thinking. To think incisively and to think for one's self is very difficult. We are prone to let our mental life become invaded by legions of half-truths and prejudices. Being educated and aware will help you grow as a person and gain a better quality of life.

On the other hand, being intelligent and educated is not enough. You must have morals also. Intelligence plus character, that is the goal of a true education. A person who possesses these two key components will be an asset to any employer, organization or themselves.

Winston Churchill captured the concept for career searching when he said, "Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm." You may not always succeed the first time, but you have to continue trying if you plan to succeed. When you give up and stop trying to achieve a goal, then you have failed. You must have the courage and determination to succeed. You must be willing to work to give yourself a better quality of life.

The American Dream cannot be obtained on a minimum wage salary. You will need more money than a part-time job can provide if you want to improve your quality of life. Dropping out of school, not attending a university and not learning a trade will guarantee a less than desirable quality of life. You have the ability to make your life be whatever you choose. Resources exist to help you achieve these goals. You must be willing to go

research and find ways to make your dreams come true. You cannot expect someone else to do all the work for you. If you sit around and wait on your friends, family, teacher or others to give you something, you may wait too late. They can guide you and point you in the right direction, but this is your life, you have to do the work.

I'm going to give you a few points to consider about your education and career path:

Be sure the environment you select is one in which you will thrive. Don't confuse environment with expertise. It is more important to find a climate that makes you happy and successful, than finding a specific industry for your education. An accountant does not have to work for an accounting firm. An educator does not have to work for a school. Your education may be specific, but you have many options. A job may pay a lot of money and it may specifically target your education, but you may work 60 hours a week, have 30 minute lunch breaks and a high level of stress. You must weigh all the options. Selecting the right environment doesn't always result in the highest compensation, but it may result in the greatest joy.

Be sure not to worry too much. You will find this is not very productive. Usually the things you worry about won't happen, and the things that you don't worry about come out of the blue. I'm not saying you should not be prepared, but you don't need to get caught up worrying about trivial issues that you may or may not have control over.

You also need to have enthusiasm and passion. Andrew Carnegie said that enthusiasm is the engine of life. You will be successful if you love what you do. When other people see your enthusiasm, they will be more prone to want to get involved or to help you succeed. Passion, Enthusiasm and Commitment are contagious, and I feel they are absolutely necessary for success.

Individuals, with the initiative and foresight to institute changes, have improved our society. They are the people who have had the courage to ask “why not?” and challenge the status quo.

We have set high goals for the state of Mississippi in terms of economic growth and development. I challenge you to be one of the courageous people and ask “why not?” It is only with you that Mississippi can meet its challenges and become the state we know we are.

Whatever path you choose, I hope that you are choosing to stay in Mississippi as you build your lives, your homes and your families.

Governor Musgrove’s and his administration are committed to continuing to create a Mississippi that today’s and future generations are proud to call home.

Finally, be true to yourself no matter what you do. Never compromise your principles. Sometimes this will lead to difficult decisions in life, but in the long run I

believe adherence to principles is essential. Ethical and moralistic judgments are much more difficult today. Keep your perspective. Fortunes are made quickly today, but reputations are still the most precious commodity. Thank you and again, congratulations.