

Good morning. On behalf of all of the people of Milwaukee County, we are so thankful to have each and every one of you - the delegates, family and friends of the NAACP convention here in our community. I hope that you are enjoying your time in our great city, county and state.

It is our pleasure to work with local NAACP President Jerry Ann Hamilton, Local Convention Coordinator Darlene Rose who is the Senior Vice President at Johnson Controls and the many other fine people and businesses in our area who put this great convention together for you. We are honored to serve as a gold sponsor of the convention through the Milwaukee County Transit System.

I hope that you all had a chance to see our very special 2005 NAACP National Convention Civil Rights Tribute Bus. As the host for this convention, we appreciate the historic struggles for freedom and equality, and the NAACP's role as a catalyst for change.

Our Civil Rights Tribute Bus acknowledges the work of national leaders in the movement like Rosa Parks, Thurgood Marshall and Julian Bond, as well as local leaders like Felmers Chaney, Father James Groppi, Lloyd Barbee and Vel Phillips – to name a few.

We are proud of our history here in Milwaukee County. In 1854, Joshua Glover, an escaped slave from Missouri, was captured by his former owner at his new home in Racine. Hours after Glover was imprisoned in Milwaukee, a crowd of 5,000 used a battering ram to free him and start his 40-day journey on the Underground Railroad from Wisconsin to Ontario.

After the Glover kidnapping and jailbreak, Wisconsin became the first and only state to declare the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional. This past Monday, we announced a national competition to design a monument to Joshua Glover in our very own Cathedral Square Park, which was formerly the home of the Milwaukee County Courthouse.

It was also our pleasure to have Kimberly Simmons join us for that announcement. Ms. Simmons is a NAACP official from Detroit and she is also the great-great-great granddaughter of Caroline Quarles.

Quarles was the first known slave to travel on the Underground Railroad through Wisconsin. Her story is of particular interest to me as the church where my father – a retired American Baptist Minister – attends is named after one of the families who helped young Miss Quarles on her journey to freedom in Canada.

I am also pleased to report that I assembled the most diverse cabinet in the history of our county. Joining me here today is our Director of Human Resources Chuck McDowell. At the county, we work hard to recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

We have much to be proud of with our history here in Milwaukee, Milwaukee County and Wisconsin. Still, we also have many challenges to overcome to make this a truly great community. It is my hope that the energy and enthusiasm coming from this convention will inspire us to even greater things in the future. Just like our tribute bus, we are not going to stand still; we are prepared to move forward.

Thank you and may God Bless You all.