

## Parade of Tears: Delivered at the Ohio State Price of Life Invitational for the Parade of Tears March along the historic Underground Railroad

- In my hands I hold the **papers** that document the slavery of my great great grandfather, Burrell Avery.
- He was ensured like cattle as the **property** of a Kentucky slave owner with the full knowledge and endorsement of the State of Kentucky and the United States **government**.
- As an African-American, I **didn't need** to have these papers to know that my heritage was one of injustice, of **servitude** and suffering.
- My people were the **victims** of the last great global tyranny and now, today, there is another great rape of humanity growing like a **darkness** over the world.
- Over the last 10 years, I have sought to bring political leaders, business leaders, **academicians**, students and community leaders, religious communities and many other **networks** together to address the re-emergence of the **global** slave trade. This is why we are here today and what the Ohio State Price of Life **Invitational** is all about.
- I believe that here on this campus and in this community, perhaps **unknown even to themselves**, are the next great abolitionists. Women and men who like those who **forged** this Underground Railroad we **walk** on today will lead many to freedom in the coming years.
- The modern-day slave doesn't work in sugar cane fields in the **Jamaica**. We don't see blood stained **ocean-port auctions**. There are no public **lynching's** or colored only drinking fountains but all around us, **slavery** is blossoming and re-establishing itself.
- In truck stops and **massage** parlors, children are being raped for pay. Through Craigslist and on-line dating services young girls and boys who should be having bedtime stories read to them are being auctioned off. In hotels and motels and condominium **complexes** young flesh is ripped from **innocence** and thrust into a modern-day nightmare of dehumanization.
- The **commoditization** of children as objects of sexual gratification demonstrates for us the real and enduring evil in the human heart. In the state of **Ohio** alone, there are over 1,000 US born child prostitutes, many of which are **sold** by their own mothers, grandmothers, aunts and uncles.
- It is with this kind of **wickedness** as our backdrop that we march today. We march to demonstrate that this kind of evil, this kind of darkness **cannot** stand. We march today to say that children are not **commodities**, that they are worthy of a life of dignity and joy.
- The reality of the re-**emergence** of the commercial slave trade is beyond my imagination. To think that in my lifetime as an **African-American** I would see simultaneously a Black man sit in the highest **seat** of power AND over 300,000 slaves living in my country-both of these extremes never entered into my mind until just a **few short years** ago.
- Today, we can do something as concerned citizens. We can send a message to those who traffic in children. We can **educate** ourselves and our community. We can **raise dollars** and awareness, we can confront **21<sup>st</sup> Century** Slavery.
- We can take a stand against the **socio-sexual pathology** that gives rise to the appetite for the rape for pay industry.

- We can take a stand against ignorance and the kind of lazy tolerance that would allow the slave trade to re-emerge in our lifetime.
- We can take a stand against the inadequacies in our antiquated laws that literally punish the victim and set free the criminal.
- The state of Ohio is now the fastest growing state in the union for modern-day slavery. Adjusted per capita, Toledo, OH is now the child prostitute capital of the United States.
- When we think about the fact that there are now more slaves in the world than were trafficked in the entire four centuries of the trans-Atlantic slave trade we have to ask ourselves some hard questions.
- Were those who allowed the last great global tyranny less educated than us?
- Were those who bought gardeners and house workers to tend to their everyday needs less moral than us?
- Were those who built out the infrastructure of slavery, who passed laws protecting slaves as property, who offered insurance to slave owners to protect their investments, were these US lawmakers less committed to justice and the ideals of the inalienable rights to life, liberty and happiness than we?
- I don't think so. There is every reason to believe that in our lifetime we could not only see the re-emergence of modern-day slavery but the acceptance of such and it is with this hanging in the balance this day and this week that we pledge ourselves to those eternal ideals of transcendent dignity.
- Today, we march to say that this evil cannot stand, that the act of selling a child into a life of sexual slavery is an absolutely evil.
- Today, we join our ancestors in the abolitionist movement, walking where they walked literally and figuratively.
- Today, we join a long Parade of Tears, stretching back into history. We join a Parade of suffering, a Parade of injustice, a Parade of brokenness. But we also join a Parade that celebrates the sacrifices of the average woman and man committed to the ideals of the inherent dignity and right to life and freedom for all.
- Throughout this week, we will confront 21<sup>st</sup> Century Slavery.
- We will address the commercial sexual exploitation of children from a variety of perspectives.
- We will address trafficking from a political perspective tomorrow as state and federal lawmakers gather at our political Town Hall Meeting.
- We will address trafficking from the legal perspective and business perspective in the business school and school of law.
- We will address trafficking from an academic perspective, a medical and social perspective, and from a spiritual perspective.
- The complexity of the modern-day slave trade demands that to come together across religious and political lines, across ethnic and racial lines, across socio-economic lines, and across disciplinary lines.

- The **monstrous** nature of the trafficking industry requires us to **set aside** our differences and give all we can give with what super powers we have at our disposal if we are ever going to end slavery before it takes **root**.
- Many of you in the **audience** this afternoon sit in places of great **power** and influence. Some of you went into the world of politics, **media**, religion and **journalism** because you wanted not only to **report**, reflect and **connect** with what is happening in the world but through your efforts to **change** what is wrong in the world.
- Some of you have literary **genius**, technological genius, **medical** genius, **legal** genius, and the question of your life is this, "What shall I do with the **super powers** that have been given to me to make a difference in this world?"
- We all can choose to be super heroes in this **epic** journey, this story we call **life**.
- We all have been given super powers to fight that **creeping** darkness that threatens to corrupt the very fabric of humanity.
- The **abduction**, commoditization, and the rape for pay of children are not just **actions of injustice**, they are an **assault** on all that it means to be preeminently human.
- Such actions **threaten us all** because the allowance of such opens the door for our society, our culture to be thrust into another dark **chapter of hopelessness** and despair.
- This next decade, I believe, will be **marked** by an all out **war** with those who would stand and fight against this great injustice and those who would seek to **establish** the slave trade.
- I believe this there is a **storm** coming upon us that will test the **very soul** of humanity once again.
- This storm will test us like our **ancestors** were tested in the **south** during slavery, like they were tested outside the death camps in **Germany**, and like they were tested in the open fields of **Rwanda**.
- Every so often, **a great evil rises up** to test the **resolve** and character of women and men and I believe we are on the precipice of such a time of testing.
- I believe there is a coming storm that **transcends** the passing of **legislation** and the prosecution of those who would traffic in children.
- The storm that **looms** on the human **horizon** is one that rages around the hearts and minds of everyday citizens like **you**.
- Recently, while returning my **computer** for service I stood behind a man who was also returning equipment for service. He **joked** with the attendant behind the counter saying, "Yeah, I think the Asian kid who put this thing together put some extra parts in it. I hope his bowl of rice gets taken away!"
- While this **joking** attitude seems harmless at first glance, it reflects a growing comfort and acceptance that somewhere, **someplace slavery** not only **exists** but is a **normal** part of life.
- I believe that in the coming decade we will need not only **fight with all of our super powers** the actual **perpetrators** who traffic in flesh, but more importantly for the hearts and minds of everyday people who will **inevitably** ask the question again, "Is it inherently wrong for some to live as slaves?"
- When we think that there are over **1,000 US born child sex slaves in the state of Ohio alone**, the real issue we need to **grapple** with is why is there such a **demand** for the **flesh of children**? What

is it in the heart of a man who would pay to rape a child, what is it in the **heart** of a **mother** who would prostitute her young daughter out of the back of her **mini-van**? This is the real question.

- We can **legislate**, **protest**, **educate**, and **prosecute** all we want but unless we address the appetite of a growing **socio-sexual pathology**, we will never truly address the issue of modern-day slavery.
- This week, I **invite** you Columbus, I invite you students, faculty, staff at the Ohio State University to dig deep, to get **involved** not only here today but to join us in **doing righteousness**.
- I invite us all to a **new Parade of Tears**, a Parade of those who would choose **courage** over **cowardice**, those who would choose **righteousness** over **convenience**, and those who would choose to **face the storm** instead of ignoring the **inevitable**.