

**Acceptance Remarks for the
Parren Mitchell Pioneer Award
By NASA Administrator Daniel S. Goldin
September 21, 1999**

Thank you. I am honored to be here, and I am even more honored to accept an award named after a truly great man like Parren Mitchell.

Because this award isn't about me, it isn't about NASA, and it isn't even about the programs we run to empower minority businesses.

It's about the spirit of Parren Mitchell. It's about never giving up and never giving in.

In early 1998, I saw a newspaper article about Congressman Mitchell's ongoing work to lift up his Baltimore neighborhood.

Now this is a fight he has been waging for many years, but even in his seventies, Parren Mitchell hits the streets, runs off the drug dealers, and gives his all—every single day—to improve people's lives.

Some people might give up this fight after a short time, but not Parren Mitchell. People mean too much to him.

And that's the same spirit NASA has. We don't support Minority Businesses because it's politically correct or because we are forced to or because we feel sorry for people.

We support minority businesses because we see firsthand the immense pool of intelligent and talented entrepreneurs in the minority community.

NASA's missions have to be the world's best. So we only want to work with the world's best. Not the best of just one segment of society, the best in the world. That means reaching out to everyone.

Often, when programs like NASA's become established and they start achieving success and earning awards, they begin to get complacent. People often believe that they can just run on auto pilot from that point on.

Well, I think a little differently. And I know Ralph Thomas and his team think differently too. NASA may have a strong program to empower minority businesses and we have achieved a lot. But today, I want to tell you that you ain't seen nothing yet!

We will continue to inspire and empower. We will continue to give minority business people the tools to succeed. Because we know that when we do, you step up and deliver.

It's not always easy, but we will succeed.

In the face of nay sayers. In the face of people who want to turn back the clock. In the face of those who believe there has always been a level playing field...we say.

We will never give up and we will never give in—not until every business person has an equal chance to succeed.

To truly honor the name of Parren Mitchell we can do nothing less.

Thank you.