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SOUTHERN JURISDICTION ADOPTS
ZERO PROSTATE CANCER AS NATIONAL PROGRAM

20

23



UNITED SUPREME COUNCIL, 33°
ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED SCOTTISH RITE | PRINCE HALL AFFILIATION | SOUTHERN JURISDICTION | USA | INC.

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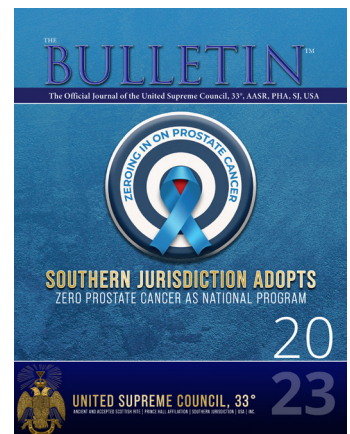
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On the Cover:

The United Supreme Council recently announced its decision to prioritize prostate cancer as the primary focus of its charitable foundation efforts. This initiative aims to address the disproportionately high incidence and mortality rates of prostate cancer within African American men.





INSTRUCTIONS FOR AUTHORS

General Instructions

For consideration, manuscripts should be emailed to Illustrious L. Ken Collins, Secretary General, at the following address: secretarygeneral@uscsjpha.org. Additionally, the subject of the article must first be approved by the Secretary General before submission.

Cover Page Required

On the first page of the manuscript, add a separate cover page that includes each author's name, Scottish Rite affiliations, and contact information. Include names and affiliations exactly as you want them to appear in the Bulletin. An example is included below:

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1. Use Garamond or Times New Roman typeset.
2. Do not exceed 2000 words, unless authorized by the Secretary General.
3. Use a concise writing style and ensure that all sentences are necessary, significant, and have relevance.
4. Do not use special formatting when constructing the article.
5. Use a heading for each section of the article (e.g. Introduction, Background Information, Conclusion, etc.).
6. Include tables, figures, and lists to illustrate concepts more clearly. Make sure that all tables, figures, and illustrations are necessary and enhance understanding.
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8. When preparing a table, use the table feature in MS Word. Do not prepare a table by simply tabbing or spacing the columns.

References

1. Include literature citations that substantiate important concepts or statements.
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MESSAGE FROM

ILLUSTRIOUS DR. COREY D. HAWKINS, SR., 33°, S:G:C:.

The United Supreme Council recently concluded its 137th Annual Session, an extraordinary gathering that convened Scottish Rite leaders, fraters, and loyal ladies from across the world. Held in Sweet Home Alabama, this year's conference was a testament to a resounding spirit of unity and excellence amongst the four legitimate supreme councils.

Setting the Stage in Huntsville

In my opinion, the choice of Huntsville as the host for the 137th Annual Session was fitting. Huntsville, often referred to as the Rocket City, is renowned for its contributions to space exploration and technology. This city embodies evolution, innovation, and the pursuit of knowledge—qualities that resonate deeply with the values upheld by our beloved organization.

Educational Seminars and Workshops

The 137th session featured a series of educational seminars aimed at empowering our membership. Topics ranged from leadership development and the expectations of a Grand Inspector General to the history of the Golden Circle and the preservation of mental health. What is more, these workshops offered a structured learning environment, one which fostered growth, fellowship, and a deeper engagement with Scottish Rite traditions.

Testimonial

I am genuinely humbled and grateful for the incredible honor bestowed upon me on Saturday night. The effort and dedication put into organizing my testimonial reflect the strong bonds of love, affection, and unity within our organization. This momentous occasion will forever hold a special place in my heart. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all members and participants for supporting an event that will forever remain a cherished memory in my journey as Sovereign Grand Commander.

Coronation, Elevation, and Investiture Ceremonies

This year, we facilitated three ritualistic ceremonies; the coronation of Sovereign Grand Inspectors General, elevation of Grand Inspectors General, and investiture of Knight Commanders of the Court of Honor. I was extremely happy to see this time-honored tradition bestowed on so many deserving fraters. Moreover, my hope is that recipients, in the years to come, uphold those Masonic obligations that merited their inclusion in these esteemed rites.

Brighter Days Ahead

As the 137th Annual Session drew to a close, participants left with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment. With God on our side, our unrelenting endeavor to methodically Rebuild our Rite Stone by Stone promises an increasingly brighter future. Together and united, I know that we will accomplish our goals; and I am more excited about the possibilities. I invite you to join our ranks, as we continue to foster progress in the months and years ahead.

May God continue to bless you and your families is my prayer.

Fraternally,



Illustrious Corey D. Hawkins, Sr., 33°
Sovereign Grand Commander



FRATERNAL HORIZONS

ELEVATING THE EXPERIENCE IN THE UNITED SUPREME COUNCIL

By Illustrious Dr. L. Ken Collins, 33°

Our steadfast dedication to service excellence is the cornerstone of operations in the United Supreme Council. The Office of the Secretary General persistently seeks to enhance our members' experience through strategic improvements and technological integration. Examples of recent improvements are listed below.

Website Enhancement

Recognizing the central role of digital accessibility, we are on the cusp of launching an online store within our official website. This initiative will streamline the procurement process, enabling Orientals to acquire supplies with ease. Such actions shall eliminate the cumbersome process of manual ordering and postal deliveries. Our aim is to optimize administrative efficiency and allow our staff to focus on the core activities of the Supreme Council.

Educational Resources

To foster continuous learning and development, we plan to add our provocative series of lectures from our monthly Deputy's Educational Workshop to the online platform. This will ensure that fraternal members have unfettered access to invaluable educational content, thereby supporting their Masonic and intellectual growth within the fraternity.

Streamlined Annual Session Registration

The 137th Annual Session exposed the need for a more efficient registration procedure. In response, we implemented an online registration portal to expedite the check-in process for our members and guests. Online registration significantly enhances the experience for attendees and provides immediate confirmation and communication. Moreover, by ensuring that all are well-informed, we believe sincerely that our membership will be able to effectively plan their participation for the week's events.

Hotel Booking Process

To address the recurring hotel booking complications, we will facilitate a pre-registration link for hotel accommodations for the upcoming 138th Annual Session. This proactive measure is anticipated to significantly reduce the administrative load and enhance our focus on the event's success.

Conclusion

The Secretary General's office is unwavering in its mission to refine our processes and ensure a superior membership experience. We are committed to developing a streamlined system that upholds the APEX doctrine, indicative of our continuous evolution and dedication to broadening our fraternal horizons for fraternal members and loyal ladies within the Southern Jurisdiction.

Illustrious L. Ken Collins, II, 33°
Grand Secretary-General H.E.





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Eloquent speech is not from the lip to ear, but rather from heart to heart!

SOVEREIGN GRAND COMMANDER'S ADDRESS

137TH ANNUAL SESSION HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA

By *Illustrious Eric Konohia*
Staff Writer

Introduction

On Monday morning, after the ceremonial welcome of the visiting Sovereign Grand Commanders, Most Worshipful Grand Masters, and delegates from other Masonic bodies, the Sovereign Grand Commander (SGC), Dr. Corey D. Hawkins, Sr., solemnly requested that doors of the Senatorial Chamber be sealed for the purpose of delivering his allocution.

During his inaugural address, which took place at the 135th Annual Session in Memphis, Tennessee in 2021, the SGC showcased exceptional oratorical prowess, reminiscent of a veteran Baptist preacher's dynamism and presence. These attributes were no doubt cultivated during his formative years with the Crusaders, a youth group at Mount New Home Missionary Baptist Church in Leighton, Alabama. His adept integration of domestic and international matters into the fabric of his speech made it pertinent to the organization's objectives. And much like his first session as SGC, this year's address maintained the high standard previously set.

Allocution

Standing with dignity in the Grand East, SGC Hawkins looked impressive in his ceremonial regalia: the Imperial Crown, SGC Robe, and the Cross of Salem Jewel. He held in his hand the symbol of authority—a 36-inch Gold Scepter topped with a globe and a Double-Headed Eagle. His confidence educated the dual roles of Sovereign Grand Commander and Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Alabama, as he warmly greeted the assembly with lyrics from the classic song, "Sweet Home Alabama."²

Prayer and Thanks

After a warm welcome, he expressed profound gratitude to Deputy Robert W. Glenn (AL) and the Fraters from the Orient of Alabama. He commended their exceptional hospitality and dedication, noting that their contributions surpassed expectations. He subsequently offered thanks to the Lord for His grace and mercy; and requested that the Grand Prior, Reverend Robert Jemerson, lead the congregation in prayer.

Forward Momentum

After the prayer, SGC Hawkins expressed a sense of collective achievement regarding the 137th Annual Session (Huntsville, Alabama). He articulated a forward momentum in elevating the member experience. Additionally, he accentuated this progression by mentioning the expanded range of workshops and the broader engagement offered to the fraters and the esteemed Loyal Ladies of the Order of the Golden Circle. Furthermore, this year marked the beginning of the Order of the Golden Circle's workshop series which, per reports, boasted high attendance and was deemed a resounding success.

Testimonial

Hawkins graciously acknowledged the heartfelt tribute paid to him during the Saturday evening testimonial. Although he did not seek such recognition, he communicated that the event was profoundly moving and humbling. The evening was abundant in praise, good wishes, and distinguished honors. Additionally, his mother, brothers, relatives, and significant other were present to bear witness to the recognition of his remarkable character and numerous achievements.

State of the Nation

Gun Violence

The SGC highlighted the moral obligations of the United Supreme Council to acknowledge and confront challenges faced by society. He pointed out that our national condition illuminates significant adversities against which we must prevail. For example, he brought to attention the persistent issue of gun violence in the United States, noting from the Gun Violence Archive that the year has seen an excess of 200 mass shootings. He advocated for the introduction of legislative measures to address this crisis, in contrast to the relaxation of existing laws and the enactment of open-carry policies in certain states.

Loan Forgiveness

SGC Hawkins addressed the recent 6-3 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that denied the president the authority to forgive

¹AZquotes.com: William J. Bryan (1900). "The Life and Speeches of Hon. Wm. Jennings Bryan" Accessed 11/17/23

²Lynard Skynard (1974), "Second Helping", MCA Records.

student loans under the HEROES Act. He emphasized the disproportionate impact of this ruling on the African American community, given the socio-economic challenges it faces. Highlighting the near necessity of student loans or financial aid for college education, he also declared the subsequent financial disadvantage faced by graduates. Hawkins called for the United Supreme Council to escalate its support for students pursuing education.

Police Violence

He tackled the persistent issue of police violence, referencing the tragic event in Memphis, TN, on January 7, 2023, where Tyre Nichols, a young Black man, was fatally assaulted by members of the local police during a traffic stop. He also stressed the collective outrage following this incident and juxtaposed it with the conviction of the officers involved in the death of George Floyd—signaling a ray of hope for accountability in such tragic circumstances.

Presidential Elections

Hawkins discussed legal developments concerning former President Donald Trump. He noted Trump's numerous charges, including an indictment related to payments to Stormy Daniels, which make him the first former President to face criminal charges. Furthermore, Trump was found liable in a civil suit for sexually abusing and defaming writer, E. Jean Carroll, resulting in a multi-million-dollar judgment. Despite these legal battles, Trump remains a potential candidate for future presidential elections.

Affirmative Action

On the topic of affirmative action, Hawkins relayed the Supreme Court's recent 6-3 decision against it for university admissions, a ruling that potentially restricts African Americans' access to higher education. Hawkins criticized the Florida State Board of Education's mandate to alter historical narratives concerning slavery and racial massacres. He emphasized the significance of authentic historical education and the responsibility to impart this knowledge within the community.

Government Shutdown

Hawkins commented on the narrowly averted government shutdown, where a last-minute spending bill passed; and President Biden subsequently signed a resolution that extended government operations. He also mentioned the unprecedented removal of Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House following a strategic move by Rep. Matt Gaetz. However, despite all the turmoil and gamesmanship authored by our political leaders, SGC Hawkins stated, "Even with its problems, this is still the greatest democracy in the world."

State of the Rite

Affirming the vitality and ongoing progress of Scottish Rite Masonry within the Southern Jurisdiction, the SGC provided assurances of the concerted efforts to continually enhance the United Supreme Council. Hawkins addressed the membership and acknowledged the challenges that may arise with the new changes. Additionally, he encouraged a collective and open-minded approach to achieve

greater advancements for the Council.

The APEX (Headquarters)

With evident pride, he announced ownership of the new headquarters, known affectionately as "The Apex." In his opinion, this facility symbolizes the growth and modernization of our organization. The opening ceremony in March 2023 welcomed all members to partake online in this significant milestone. Additionally, Hawkins invited members to visit "The Apex" and download the Bulletin for documentation and photographs.

Deputies' Workshop

SGC Hawkins praised the success of the monthly Deputies' Workshop. He expounded on the educational engagement of our members and noted that these sessions have been enlightening and motivational. Additionally, he reported that the quarterly Webinars have consistently received positive feedback from the fraternity.

Morale

SGC Hawkins conveyed an optimistic outlook for the Southern Jurisdiction, citing high morale amongst members. He personally witnessed this positivity by attending several Councils of Deliberation. He also expressed satisfaction with the membership's commitment to Scottish Rite work and their increasing participation rates.

Programs

The "Back in the Rite Drive" (B.I.R.D.) initiative continues to successfully reintegrate members back into the fold. While speaking about fraternal programs, SGC Hawkins shared a pivotal development in the educational domain: the introduction of the Scottish Rite College. Known as the Academy for the Progressive Education and Examination of Scottish Rite Masons, or APEX Program, this educational endeavor is slated to launch in mid-2024. He said the following of the program:

The APEX Program aims to deepen the understanding of Scottish Rite teachings and elevate the intellectual and ethical standards within the United Supreme Council. It pledges to foster a supportive educational environment that promotes competence, professionalism, ethical behavior, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence. The curriculum is meticulously designed to impart the nuanced lessons inherent in Scottish Rite degrees from diverse perspectives, including historical, ethical, philosophical, and moral viewpoints. Participants will engage in comprehensive learning activities, including readings, discussions, and assessments to cultivate reflective and strategic thinking.

SGC Hawkins encouraged all members to participate in the APEX Program and benefit from its transformative educational experience.

Legal Matters

SGC Hawkins provided a thorough update on the ongoing legal

matters stemming from the 2015 financial discrepancies. He reported that Mr. Fred McWilliams pled guilty to a Class B Felony and has been sentenced to 12 years of probation, with an order to pay restitution amounting to \$1.14 million. Hawkins assured members that efforts are underway to recover the full amount of misappropriated funds, with a civil case active in the Shelby County Chancery Court. He extended gratitude for the members' patience and understanding throughout this process.

Republic of Liberia

Hawkins addressed a noteworthy decision concerning Masonic governance. On September 5, 2023, the United Supreme Council revoked all charters in the Republic of Liberia and dissolved the Orient. This action followed attempts by the Grand Master of Liberia to overstep his authority concerning the appointment and coronation processes. Hawkins reaffirmed the principle that there can only be one SGC within the United Supreme Council—a role that he currently occupies.

Unity Signing and Amity

He reflected on the positive reception of the Unity Signing event on September 7, 2022. This occasion involved the four legitimate Supreme Councils in the United States, which quelled previous misinformation and fortified the institution's resolve.

Hawkins noted that there has been a surge in interest for recognition and amity agreements from other Supreme Councils. He indicated that the United Supreme Council is actively considering these prospects and aims to petition for membership in the World Conference of Supreme Councils. This move is intended to establish a global presence for Prince Hall Scottish Rite Masonry and emphasize our right to representation on an international level. Such actions will give Prince Hall Scottish Rite Masonry a footprint in Scottish Rite Masonry worldwide. "We deserve a seat at the table," he said.

I Shall Wear a Crown

In 1983, Thomas Whitfield wrote and composed a gospel song entitled, "I Shall Wear a Crown." Hawkins quoted the lyrics to the song.³

I shall wear a crown
I shall wear a crown
When it's all over
When it's all over

I shall see His face
I shall see His face
When it's all over
When it's all over

I'm going to put on my robe and tell the story how I made it over
I'm going to put on my robe and tell the story how I made it over

Soon as I get home
Soon as I get home.

While closing, he said that we envision a future where conflict is

obsolete, and we exchange our temporal investments for eternal garments. Yet, in our present reality, the regalia of the Scottish Rite stands out as a distinguished emblem of Prince Hall Scottish Rite Masonry, a badge of honor that we wear with pride.

Reflecting on the journey since 2015, it is evident that the Southern Jurisdiction navigated through a period of significant challenges. Despite the adversities faced, I am elated to declare that brighter days are upon us. Through every season of hardship and every phase of difficulty—be it tumult or tranquility, adversity or prosperity, error or accuracy, the favorable or the unfavorable—our resilience has been unwavering. We stand united, fortified, and flourishing, he pronounced.

Conclusion

From my vantagepoint, SGC Hawkins approached this communication with precision and intent. His address was forthright, and never evaded substantial issues that face our nation and the United Supreme Council. His address served as a call to action to refine our methods and reflect upon the teachings imparted. Moreover, in his articulate discourse, he inspired me to continue to contribute to our collective mission. Further, he prompted us to view each triumph not as isolated successes, but as progressive strides towards a greater objective, for which we are all destined



³The Thomas Whitfield Company (1984), Bridgeport Music

ZERO

THE END OF PROSTATE CANCER

By *Illustrious Danny A. West, Sr., 33°*

Introduction

During the United Supreme Council's 136th Annual Session (2nd Executive Session) held in Jacksonville, Florida, the pressing issue of prostate cancer and its disproportionate impact on Black men was brought to the forefront. This critical concern led to the formation of a specialized committee under the auspices of the United Supreme Council Charitable Foundation, with the express purpose of identifying a Prostate Cancer Organization (PCO) for potential support.

Committee Composition

As the appointed Chairman, I had the honor of leading an assembly of the Council's esteemed members. This committee includes: SGIG (Dr.) Anthony T. Stafford, Lt. Grand CDR (FL), SGIG William D. Brooks (AZ), SGIG Timothy Seay, Deputy of (AZ), SGIG Ronald J. Nealy (WE), SGIG Christopher Terrell, Deputy of (FL), SGIG William Mitchell (WE), and SGIG (Dr.) Donald Ware (CA).

Each appointed member brings a wealth of experience and dedication to this significant initiative. After thorough research and deliberation, the committee resolved to endorse a single entity from several esteemed prostate cancer organizations: ZERO—The End of Prostate Cancer. This recommendation aligns with our unwavering commitment to eradicating prostate cancer and supporting those impacted by it.

ZERO

ZERO is a premier nonprofit organization dedicated to eradicating prostate cancer and providing comprehensive support to affected individuals. The organization champions research initiatives, offers essential support, and devises strategies to promote health equity, thereby, addressing the community's most pressing needs. With a legacy spanning over a quarter of a century, ZERO has substantially contributed to the national and local battle against prostate cancer. Collaborating with healthcare partners, ZERO has been at the forefront of facilitating research and offering free screenings, direct patient care, and educational resources to empower patients and their families. Additionally, ZERO's robust support network encompasses a wealth of educational resources, including a comprehensive website, various print materials, educational videos, and webinars, all aimed at disseminating vital disease-related information to millions of men and their families.

ZERO360 Team

The adept ZERO360 team comprises seasoned case managers who guide patients through the complexities of financial options, insurance, and Medicare intricacies, while providing much-needed emotional support. Additionally, the organization's financial assistance program has been a beacon of hope, extending grants to over 48,000 men, particularly benefiting those with advanced prostate cancer who face financial barriers to treatment. Pioneering in the field of mobile prostate cancer testing, ZERO plays a pivotal role in disseminating critical health information and championing early detection strategies. Their ongoing commitment includes bolstering early detection efforts and free testing in collaboration with local partners nationwide.

ZERO Cancer Run

The ZERO Prostate Cancer Run/Walk Series stands as the most extensive national event series which specifically targets the eradication of prostate cancer. Spanning over a decade, this initiative has been instrumental in elevating public awareness and fostering a sense of unity among men and their families in confronting this health challenge.

ZERO Campaigns

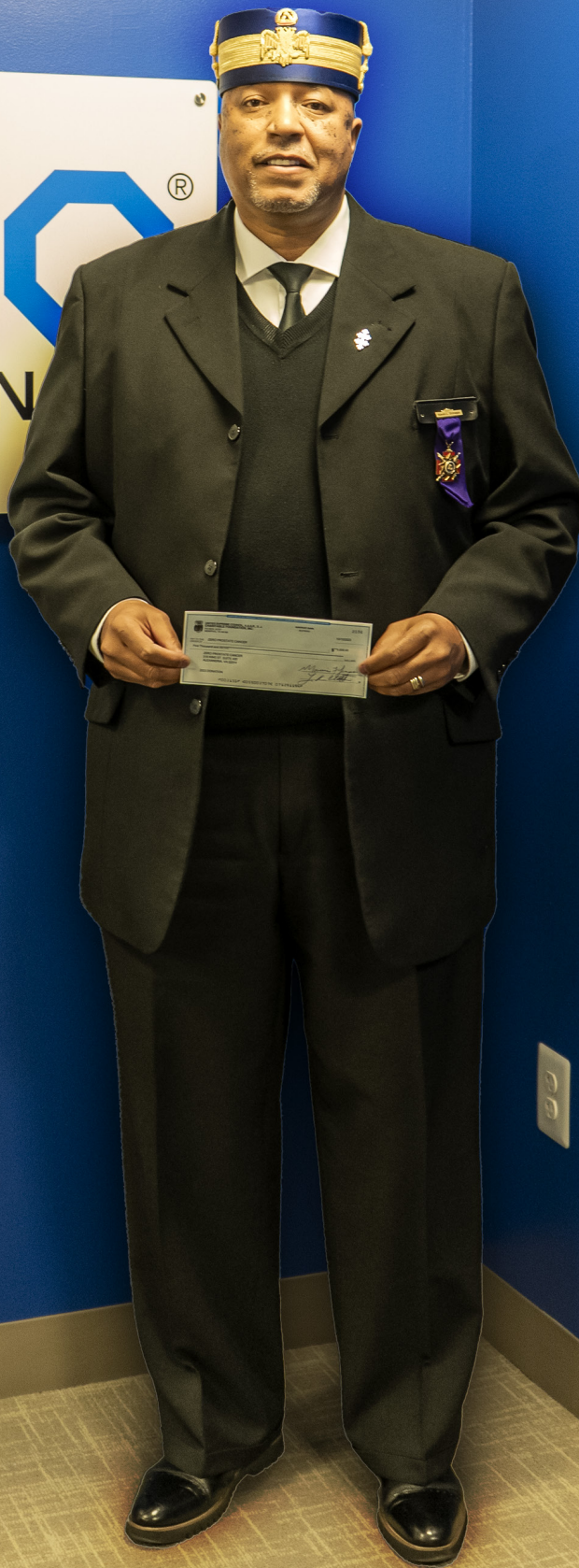
ZERO spearheads the national conversation on prostate cancer through a variety of channels. These include dynamic awareness campaigns, a strong social media presence, a dedicated website, and the informative blog 'Journey to ZERO'. The organization's regional chapters serve as a critical link, actively engaging with local communities to stimulate grassroots involvement.

Annual Summit

Positioned as a dominant force in prostate cancer advocacy, ZERO is committed to enhancing federal research funding, which has been pivotal in the discovery of essential prostate cancer treatments. The organization's annual summit is a convergence of advocates nationwide, intent on prioritizing prostate cancer on the agendas of federal and state governments, as well as within community groups and influential bodies like the United Supreme Council.

ZERO®

PROSTATE CANCER



USC's Contribution

Because of the many attributes of ZERO, the United Supreme Council Charitable Foundation voted to approve a \$5,000.00 donation. We are proud and honored to donate monies to an organization that benefits many men from all walks of life. Additionally, we look forward to signing a Memorandum of Understanding with ZERO to make future, more substantial donations.

Conclusion

In summary, supporting non-profits like ZERO is a strategic investment in the well-being of global communities. The goal of disease eradication demands a collective, sustained effort that spans borders and demographics, a feat often best coordinated by non-profit organizations. These organizations can inspire and maintain public and private support for such endeavors more effectively than disease control programs, which are often seen as less urgent. As an organization with a charitable foundation, we are committed to support ZERO, as they blaze a trail toward a brighter future for all.



SYMBOLISM

UNDERSTANDING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WEARING THE SCOTTISH RITE 33RD DEGREE RING

*By Illustrious Marlon S. Honeywell
Staff Writer*

Introduction

The Scottish Rite, an appendant body of Freemasonry, originated in the early 18th century. While it bears the name “Scottish,” its roots are a blend of French, Scottish, and American traditions.¹ The Rite evolved from earlier European practices and was officially established in its current form in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1801, marking a significant milestone in Masonic history.

Originally consisting of 25 degrees, the Rite was expanded to 33 degrees by the early 19th century.² These degrees are a series of progressive teachings and rituals that build upon foundational principles. In fact, the Scottish Rite provides a more elaborate and metaphysical interpretation of Masonic symbolism, focusing greatly on insightful ethical lessons.^{3,4} The esoteric excursion through the Scottish Rite degrees is more than a mere procession of rituals; it is an ascension into deeper philosophical understanding and enlightenment.

Brief Historical Background

Prince Hall Masonry, an esteemed branch of the Masonic tree, stands as a bastion of African American history and civil rights advocacy. Founded by Prince Hall, an abolitionist and civil rights pioneer, in 1775, it represents a relentless pursuit of liberty, equality, and fraternity—particularly for people of color during times of profound social inequality.⁵ Hall and fourteen other men of color were inducted into the fraternity, which denotes a pivotal moment in the annals of Masonic and African American heritage.

Across the extensive chronicle of America’s past, Ancient Craft and Scottish Rite Masonry, Prince Hall Affiliation, evolved in tandem with non-Prince Hall Masonic organizations. Initially, Prince Hall and non-Prince Hall institutions were established as separate entities due to stringent racial barriers. However, these two venerable institutions have, over time, demonstrated a



Symbolism is the language of the Mysteries. By symbols, men have ever sought to communicate to each other those thoughts which transcend the limitations of language – Manly P. Hall

¹ Dehoyos A. Albert Pike’s Morals and Dogma: Annotated Edition. The Supreme Council, 33, SJ., USA. 2011.

² Supreme Council, SJ. History of the Rite. <https://scottishrite.org/about/history/>. Accessed November 14, 2023.

³ Hutchens R. A Bridge to Light: A Study in Masonic Ritual and Philosophy. The Supreme Council, 33, SJ., USA. 2010.

⁴ McNulty W. Freemasonry: Symbols, Secrets, Significance. Thames & Hudson. 2006; pg. 120-135.

⁵ Walkes, J. Black Square and Compass: 200 Years of Prince Hall Freemasonry. Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co., Inc. 1981. Pg. 45-60

profound confluence in their ceremonial rituals, hierarchical degrees, and rich symbology. Additionally, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, there was increasing recognition and collaboration between Prince Hall and non-Prince Hall bodies.^{6,7} To this end, many jurisdictions now have mutual recognition and fraternal relations, acknowledging the legitimacy and shared ancestry of countless Masonic traditions. Such actions indicate a substantial step toward inclusivity and unity within the Masonic society.

Symbolism in Scottish Rite Masonry

Irrespective of affiliation, symbolism in the Scottish Rite is the language through which members communicate deeper truths. Each symbol, from the simplest tools of the stonemason to the most elaborate allegorical metaphors, is laden with multiple layers of history and personal and conjectural implications.^{8,9,10} A case in point is the ring associated with the 33rd degree.

The 33rd Degree Ring^{11, 12, 13}

Upon ascending to the apex of Scottish Rite Masonry, the initiate is honored with a resplendent gold ring. This ring is not just a modest piece of jewelry: it symbolizes the magnificence associated with cognitive illumination and commendable achievement. Furthermore, it personifies the bearer's commitment to the order's precepts and his willingness to ensure that the rules and regulations of the United Supreme Council are followed, as outlined in the Constitution and General Regulations. An image of the ring may be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

Symbolic Elements

The Equilateral Triangle

At the center of the ring lies an equilateral triangle and the number 33. This triangle represents strength, stability, and balance, while the number denotes completion of the Scottish Rite degrees.¹⁴ The triangle also represents the omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience of the Grand Architect of the Universe.¹¹

Gold

The use of gold in crafting the ring is quite noteworthy. Gold, an element that does not corrode or tarnish and the desired alchemical product, embodies the timeless nature of truth and an enduring obligation to age-old ideologies.¹⁵ Dating back to ancient times, alchemy was an early form of chemical science and philosophical discipline that sought to transform base metals into noble metals like gold. Deeply spiritual to many, alchemy epitomizes the transformation of the soul and the attainment of advanced knowledge. Additionally, gold is not negatively impacted by oxygen and most acids, certifying it as the perfect metal for industrial use.



Photo: 33° Ring with motto

Motto

Traditionally, the ring bears a few inscriptions, including the motto "Deus Meumque Jus" and the recipient's name and date of receiving the degree. These inscriptions personalize the ring and make it a universal symbol of success and a physical reminder of the recipient's duty.¹⁶

The phrase "Deus Meumque Jus" has its roots in medieval Europe. It is closely associated with monarchies, particularly in the context of the divine right of kings. It was a political and religious doctrine which asserted that a monarch's authority was directly from God, justifying absolute power and authority. However, in the Masonic context, the motto is a declaration that the wearer will live willingly in concert with deific principles and natural laws.¹⁷

Implications

A Call to Moral Duty

The motto is a constant reminder of one's duty to uphold the highest ethical standards.¹⁷ It is a call to practice fairness, integrity, and righteousness in all aspects of life. Additionally, the Grand Inspector General is also reminded that his actions and decisions should align with a higher moral compass, one that is guided by divine wisdom and truth.

Relationship with the Divine

"Deus Meumque Jus" reflects a relationship with the divine. It also concedes the Grand Architect's role in guiding decisions. In this regard, the Grand Inspector General should seek to align personal actions with divine will and strive always to be virtuous and just.

⁶ Gray, D. The History of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio F&AM 1971-2011: The Fabric of Freemasonry. Author House, 2012. Pg. 75-90.

⁷ Wesley CH. Prince Hall: Life and Legacy. The United Supreme Council, SJ, PHA, 1983. Pg. 100-115.

⁸ Hall MP. The Secret Teachings of All Ages. H.S. Crocker Company, 1928. Pg. 150-170

⁹ Roberts AE. The Craft and Its Symbols: Opening the Door to Masonic Symbolism. Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply Co, 1974. Pg 80-95.

¹⁰ Bullock SC. Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996. Pg. 110-130.

¹¹ Dehoyos A. The Scottish Rite Ritual and Monitor. The Supreme Council, 33, SJ, USA, 2008. Pg 250-270

¹² Hodapp C. Freemasons for Dummies. Wiley, 2005. Pg. 180-200.

¹³ Jacob M. Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in the 18th Century. Oxford University Press, 1991. Pg. 90-110.

¹⁴ The Grand Lodge of Texas. The Equilateral Triangle. The Masonic Trowel. <https://scottishrite.org/about/history/>. Accessed November 16, 2023.

¹⁵ Corrosion Doctors. Gold Corrosion. <https://www.corrosion-doctors.org/MatSelect/corrgold.htm>. Accessed November 16, 2023.

¹⁶ Beresniak D. Symbols of Freemasonry. Assouline, 2000. Pg. 60-80.

¹⁷ Pound, R. The Philosophy of Freemasonry. Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010. Pg. 30-50.

Personal Sovereignty and Responsibility

The motto accentuates personal sovereignty and responsibility. It suggests that everyone has the duty to govern themselves according to godly principles.¹⁸ This self-governance is not for personal gain but to contribute to the greater good and support the scriptural ideals of love, hope, and charity.

Triple Band ^{11,24,25}

The Trinity

The triple band is often interpreted as a symbol of various forms of trinities. One common explanation is the representation of the threefold nature of existence – creation, preservation, and destruction.^{19,20} Another aligns with the Christian Holy Trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.²¹ The latter description depicts Freemasonry's roots in Christian Europe, where the Trinity played a central role in religion. However, it's important to note that while Masonic symbolism often draws from Christianity, Freemasonry is non-denominational and embraces members from various ethnicities and spiritual backgrounds.

Three Pillars of Freemasonry

The triple band may be seen as a representation of the three pillars of Freemasonry – Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty.²² These pillars are essential tenets that uphold the Masonic temple, both literally and figuratively. Wisdom is necessary for governance, strength for support, and beauty to adorn and illuminate. The ring, therefore, is a perfect reminder that these principles guide a Mason's life and actions.



Photo Credit: Facebook, Scottish Rite Double Headed Eagle Group. www.facebook.com



Photo Credit: Facebook, Scottish Rite Double Headed Eagle Group. www.facebook.com

Three Stages of a Mason's Journey

The triple band may embody the Mason's journey through the degrees. This voyage can be conceptualized as comprising three stages: the first being the initiation and learning of basic principles, the second involving deeper exploration into philosophy and ethics, and the third culminating in enlightenment and comprehension of the higher degrees, more particularly the 33rd degree.

How to Wear the Ring

The ring should be worn on the third finger of the left hand with the Delta Apex toward the fingertip.²³ Wearing the ring is a persistent reminder that the frater is expected to observe and enforce approved guidelines and procedures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the symbols of Scottish Rite Masonry, particularly the 33rd degree ring, are rich in meaning and significance. They provide a framework through which Masons can explore theoretical ideas, ethical principles, and mystical truths. Moreover, the 33rd degree ring stands as a testament to the Mason's journey towards enlightenment and his stern pledge to uphold the rules and regulations of the United Supreme Council and the highest ideals of Freemasonry. **So Mote It Be**

¹⁸ Weisberger RW. *Speculative Freemasonry and the Enlightenment: A Study of the Craft in London, Paris, Prague, and Vienna*. McFarland and Co. 1993. Pg. 110-130.

¹⁹ The Lotus Sculpture. Hindu God Shiva—The Destroyer. <https://www.lotussculpture.com/shiva-hindu-god-lord-destruction-meaning-symbolism.html>. Accessed November 16, 2023.

²⁰ The Yoga Sanctuary. The Vedic Trinity: Create, Sustain, Destroy. <https://www.theyogasacnctuary.biz/the-vedic-trinity-create-sustain-destroy/>. Accessed November 17, 2023.

²¹ Study.com. What is the Holy Trinity. <https://study.com/learn/lesson/what-is-the-holy-trinity.html>. Accessed November 17, 2023.

²² Marcus R. Three Pillars of Freemasonry: Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty. <https://www.gilavalleylodge9.com/post/three-great-pillars-of-freemasonry-wisdom-strength-and-beauty>. Accessed November 18, 2023.

²³ Hodapp C. Lore of the Ring. *Masonic News*. *Freemasonry for Dummies*. <https://freemasonsfordummies.blogspot.com/2011/09/lore-of-ring.html>. Accessed November 15, 2023.

²⁴ NMJ Scottish Rite. Scottish Rite Rings: The Meaning Behind the Band. <https://scottishritenmj.org/blog/scottish-rite-rings-the-meaning-behind-the-band#:~:text=In%2032%C2%B0%20Scottish%20Rite,wear%20the%2033rd%20degree%20ring.> Accessed November 15, 2023.

²⁵ USC. *Constitution and General Regulations*. USC. 2013. Pg 61.



TIMING IS EVERYTHING

ACKNOWLEDGING THE CONSEQUENCES OF IMPATIENCE

By *Illustrious P. Cardell Worlds*
Staff Writer

Introduction

Patience has long been one of the more difficult abilities to master, and even more challenging to maintain. Patience is defined as bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint, manifesting forbearance under provocation or strain; not hasty or impetuous; steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity.¹

In the race to space and the moon, America watched as the Russians experienced success with their first artificial satellite, Sputnik 1, in 1957.² Given recent advancements by the Russians at that time, patience and efficiency among America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) ensured their simultaneous success, along with courageous astronauts and a knowledgeable ground crew, particularly those responsible for calculations.³ This demonstration of commitment, professionalism, competence, and patience eventually led the Americans to land on the moon in 1969.

Examples of Impatience *Chief of the Tabernacle*

The Scottish Rite provides examples which demonstrate that a lack of patience can result in an unfortunate outcome. For example, in the 23rd degree, Chief of the Tabernacle, members of the tribe of Levi, in particular Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, were responsible for lighting the fire of offering. In this story, the sons impatiently ignited the censer with what is referred to as 'a strange fire'. Additionally, as a consequence of impatience, Nadab and Abihu were immediately consumed by the fire.⁴ This excerpt may also be found in the King James version of the Bible (i.e., Leviticus, chapter 10, verse 1).⁵



Two things define you: your patience when you have nothing and your attitude when you have everything – George Bernard Shaw

¹ Accessed February 23, 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patient>

² Accessed February 23, 2023. NASA. NASA Space Science Data Coordinated Archive. <https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/nmc/spacecraft/display.action?id=1957-001B>. Accessed December 3, 2023.

³ Accessed February 23, 2023. NPR. Hidden Figures: How Black Women Did the Math that Put Men on the Moon. <https://www.npr.org/2016/09/25/495179824/hidden-figures-how-black-women-did-the-math-that-put-men-on-the-moon>.

⁴ Accessed February 13, 2023. United Supreme Council. Book of the Scottish Rite 4th - 32nd (Prince Hall Affiliated). 1946.

⁵ Accessed February 13, 2023. <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus%2010%3A13&version=KJV>

Royal Arch of Enoch

Another example may be found in the 13th degree, Royal Arch of Enoch. In this degree, three companions who descended into the subterranean compartments and retrieved a triangular plate of gold, bearing the True Ineffable Name of God, were rewarded. Having heard of this feat, several jealous and impatient people visited the ruins to gather items of value with hopes of also obtaining a favorable reward. Upon returning to the site, many tried to dissuade them from proceeding; but ignorance, tyranny, fanaticism, and impatience led them to continue. The result was an explosion which consumed all who descended into the subterranean compartments without God's favor or blessings.^{6,7}

Grand Master Hiram Abiff

In Ancient Craft Masonry, a similar comparison can be made when discussing the three fellowcrafts who demanded impatiently the password from Grand Master Hiram Abiff for a degree not yet obtained. Impatience led the three ruffians to extort and murder the Master Builder, Hiram Abiff. What is more, this allegory teaches learners that patience may have alluded the ruffians, but—in the end—justice did not. The fellowcrafts were killed for their murderous plot.

Prince of Jerusalem

In the 16th degree, Cyrus, king of Persia, recognizing the sincere dedication of his prisoner, Zerubbabel, demanded impatiently of him to be admitted into the ancient mysteries. He demanded such three times; and on his third and final attempt, Zerubbabel responded simply, "I keep the Holy fire."⁸



A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel – Proverbs 15:18

Patience & Harmony

In freemasonry, degrees are saturated with formal, official, and prestigious titles and positions. So attractive are these ranks, it becomes easy to forget the many positive lessons taught to Scottish Rite masons throughout the degrees—which include patience and harmony.

As seen in the example from Ancient Craft Masonry, the three culprits who murdered Grand Master Hiram met their physical demise because of impatience. Although many brethren are familiar with the particulars of this story and its ending, the unbridled eagerness of those ruffians appears to still linger in the spirit of many of our members. In this regard, please be mindful that the internal war against ego must be fought daily: Though we may lose today, tomorrow brings another opportunity to get it right.

Character & Personality *Character and Personality*

The character and personality of a man are often used to define him, based on observed behavior over time. Character is a complex of mental and ethical traits, defining a person, group, or nation.⁹ While both are used to describe someone's behaviors, the two examine different aspects of an individual. Personality is more visible, while character is revealed over time, through varying situations.¹⁰

DSM-5

Mental health conditions which may affect character and personality are defined by the American Psychiatric Association's 5th edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM-5). The DSM-5 definitively outlines the characteristics of mood, personality, and other disorders.¹¹ An example of a diagnosis where impatience may be noted is Histrionic Personality Disorder (HPD).

Histrionic Personality Disorder

HPD is primarily characterized by a pattern of excessive attention-seeking behaviors, including inappropriate seduction and an obsession with looks. Individuals often display emotional overreaction and a constant need for approval. While the research may



It is very strange that the years teach us patience - that the shorter our time, the greater our capacity for waiting – Elizabeth Taylor

not directly connect HPD to impatience, a relationship may be inferred based on the described traits.

Impatience

People with HPD may exhibit impatience because of their intense desire for attention and approval. When these needs are not immediately met, they might become frustrated or anxious. This could manifest as impatience, especially in situations where individuals feel they are not the center of attention or when their efforts are ignored. For example, ignoring someone with HPD can lead to extreme emotional reactions, internal or external, and feelings of discomfort. As such, impatience may be remarkable, as the person urgently seeks to regain attention and reassurance.

Defense Mechanisms for Impatience

Repression and dissociation serve as significant mechanisms of defense for impatience. In some cases, impatient individuals often exhibit symptoms of impulsiveness. To satisfy this compelling urge, some seek ranks, titles, high-level speaking engagements, and positions (perceived or actual) of importance. Such behaviors exist in almost all organizations—more especially, this of ours.

Impact of Impatience

Leo Tolstoy, famed author of the book, *War and Peace*, stated, "The two most powerful warriors are patience and time." Additionally, Plautus, a Roman playwright, stated, "Patience is the best remedy for every trouble." To this end, impatience is often accompanied by emotions—such as anger, stress, and irritability, among others. The impact of impatience can affect health

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pike, Albert. *Liturgy of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite 4* - 14 .

⁸ Hutchens, Rex. *A Bridge to Light*. The Supreme Council. 2010.

⁹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/character>

¹⁰ <https://positivepsychology.com/character-traits/>

¹¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK542325/>

and well-being.¹² It may also be the cause of several physiological health conditions, like high blood pressure (hypertension), high blood sugar (diabetes) and weight gain (obesity). Mental health conditions, such as anxiety, insomnia, and panic attacks, may also be byproducts of impatience.

Id, Ego, & Superego

Sigmund Freud, an Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, explained the Ego as that realistic part of life that exists between the Super-Ego (operates as a moral conscience) and the Id (primitive or instinctual part of the mind that contains aggressive drives and hidden memories).¹³

Using Freud's psychoanalytic theory, one can deduce that the fellowcrafts (under the section titled Grand Master Hiram Abiff) failed their test because the battle between Id and Super-Ego was lost. This battle is fought daily to curb the desires of having impressive positions, grand titles, and power, etc. And, as previously stated, each new day provides an opportunity to win this battle by circumscribing primitive desires and keeping ourselves within due bounds of societal norms.

Conclusion

Ignorance, tyranny, and fanaticism demonstrate flaws in character and exemplify

¹² <https://www.unitedwecare.com/how-patience-impacts-emotions/>

¹³ <https://www.simplypsychology.org/psyche.html>

¹⁴ Holy Bible. <https://www.bible.com/bible/114/PHP.4.6-7.NKJV>. Accessed December 6, 2023.



To lose patience is to lose the battle. – Mahatma Gandhi

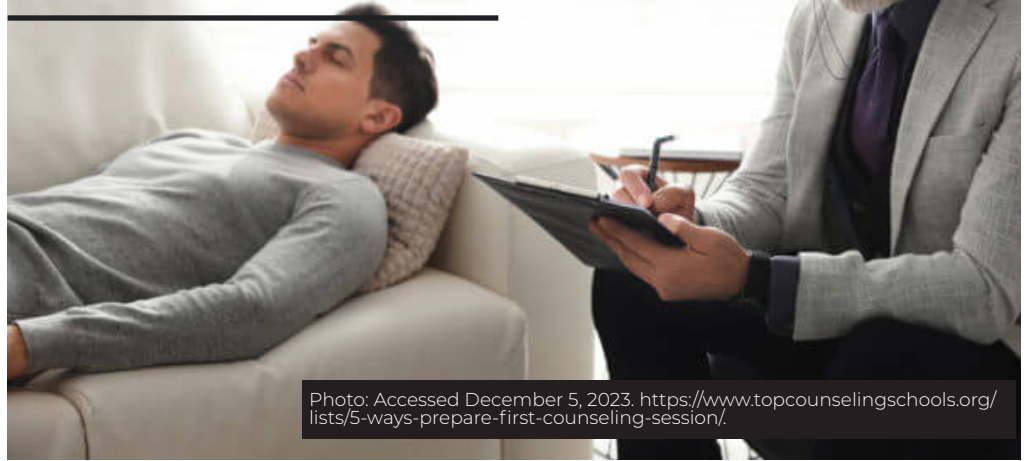


Photo: Accessed December 5, 2023. <https://www.topcounselingschools.org/lists/5-ways-prepare-first-counseling-session/>.

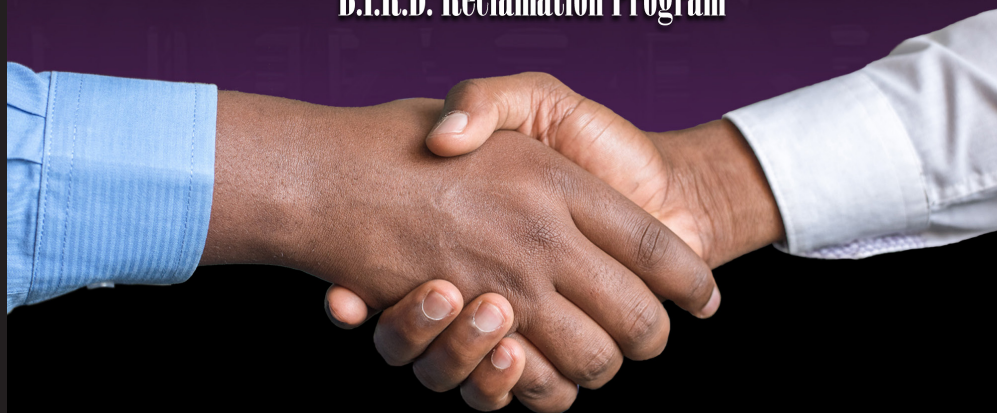
man's inability to obtain perfection. Just as an addict must develop coping skills and identify triggers to battle addiction, a frater within his valley and orient can do the same against innate yearnings.

Rather than succumbing to impatient urges and desires, let's do our best to resist the temptation to allow envy, greed, bitterness, and misguided ambition to consume our spirit. Moreover, one proven method to win this war is to practice consistently the first

lesson learned at the door of Freemasonry: Wait with patience. And finally, the Bible confirms the importance of patience in the Book of Philippians: *Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*¹⁴

Back in the Rite Drive

B.I.R.D. Reclamation Program



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CELEBRATING THE 2023 CLASS OF SOVEREIGN GRAND INSPECTORS GENERAL



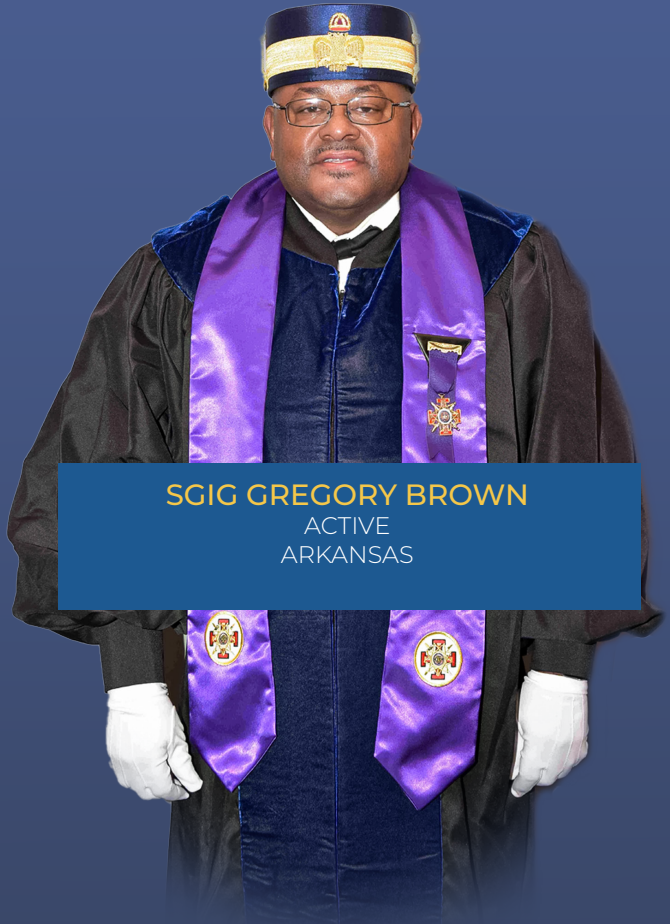
UNITED SUPREME COUNCIL-SJ CONSTITUTION & GENERAL REGULATIONS ARTICLE VII

Sovereign Grand Inspectors General

SECTION 1. A Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the Thirty-third and Last Degree, Active Member of the United Supreme Council, has the right and power to visit all the Bodies of the Rite in this Jurisdiction; inspect their work, correct irregularities, and do such other constitutional acts as he may deem in the best interest of the Rite. For all such acts and doings, he is amenable to the United Supreme Council.



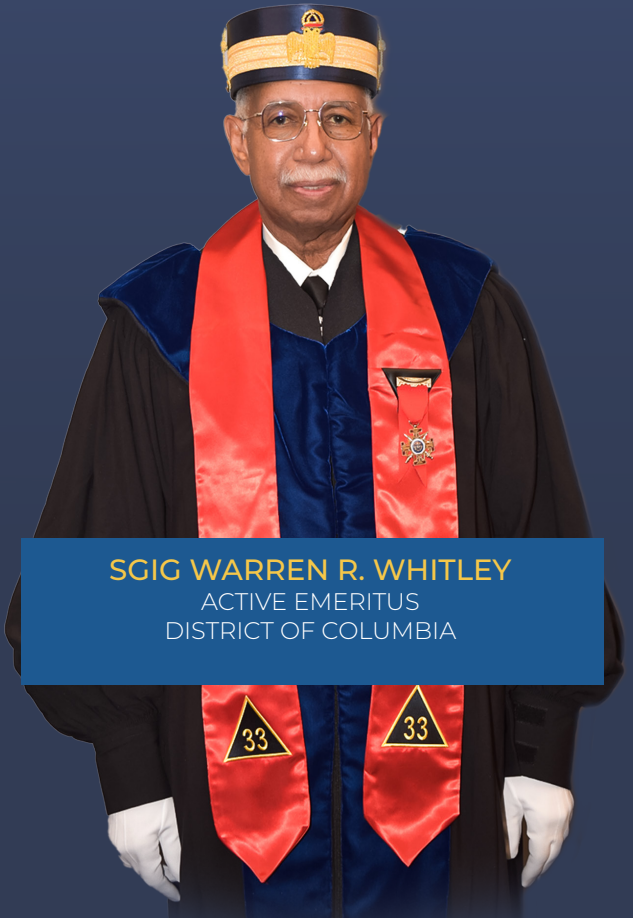
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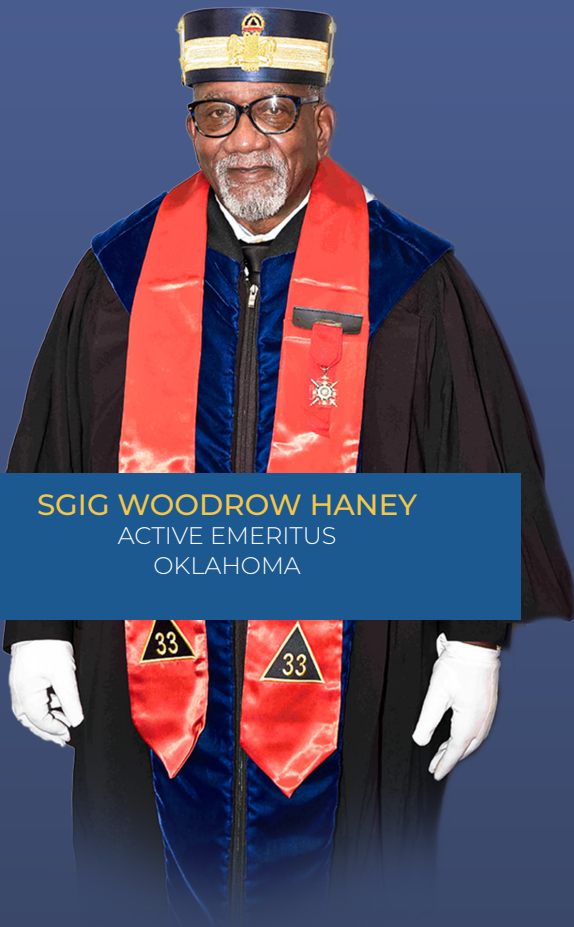
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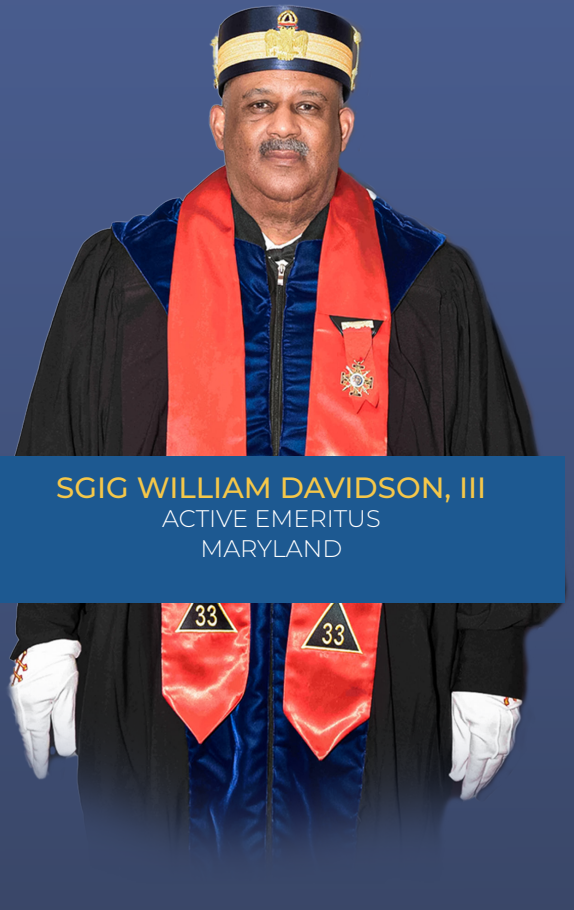
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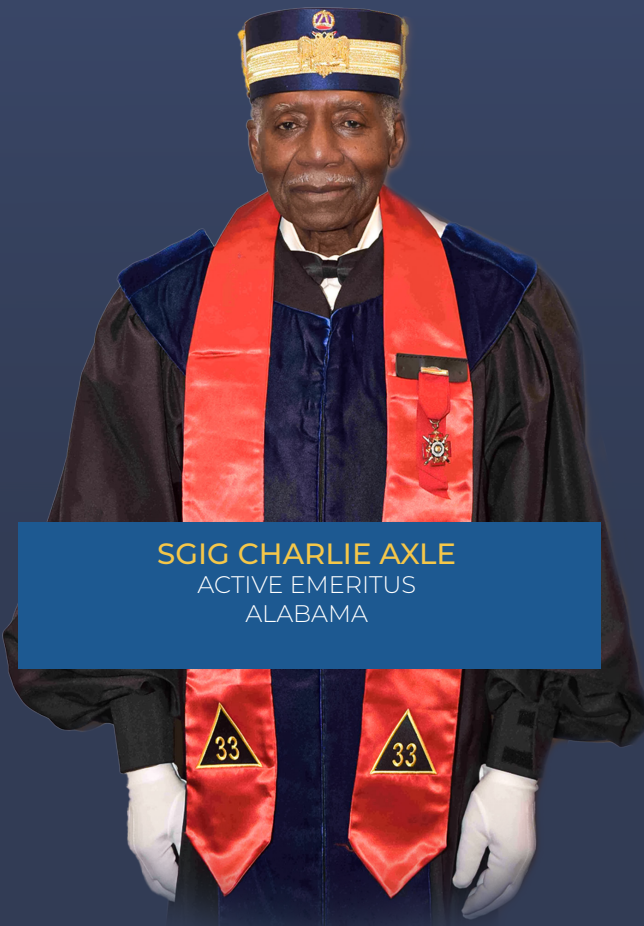
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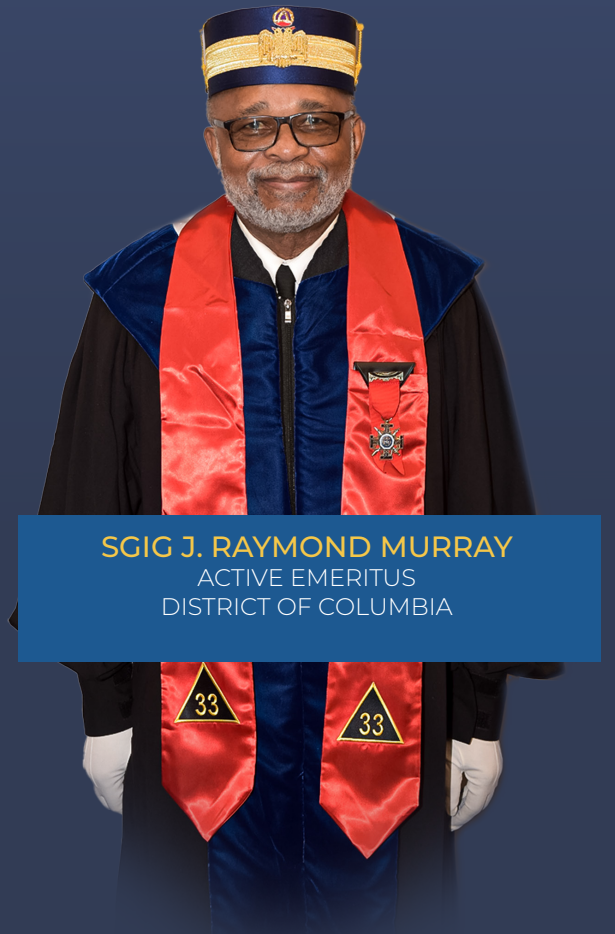
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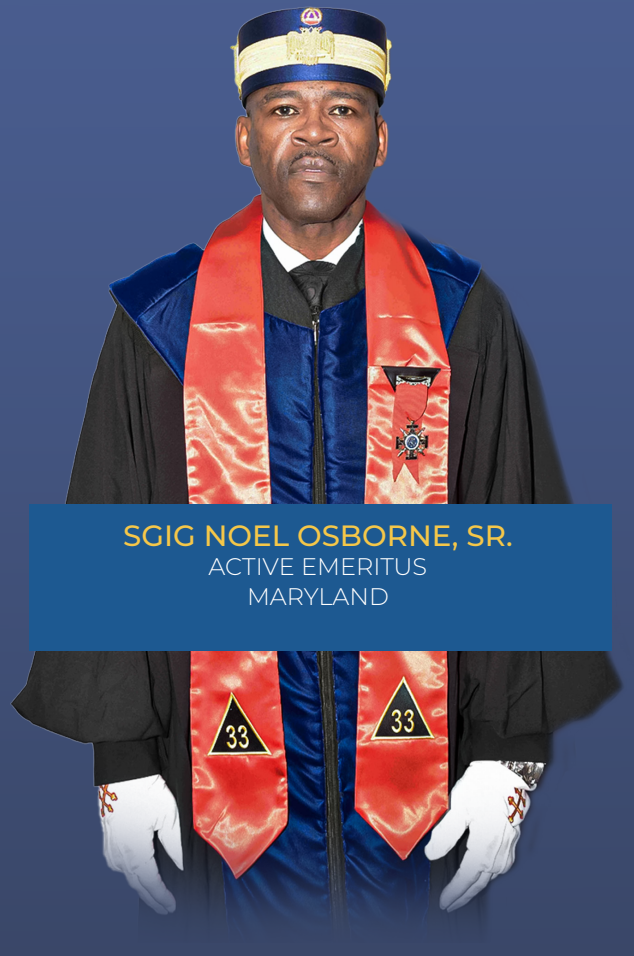
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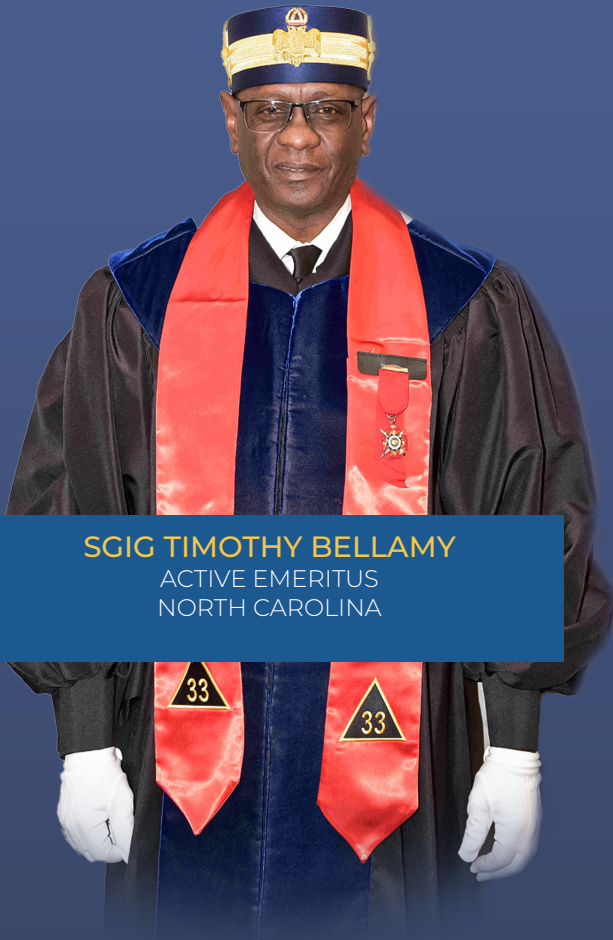
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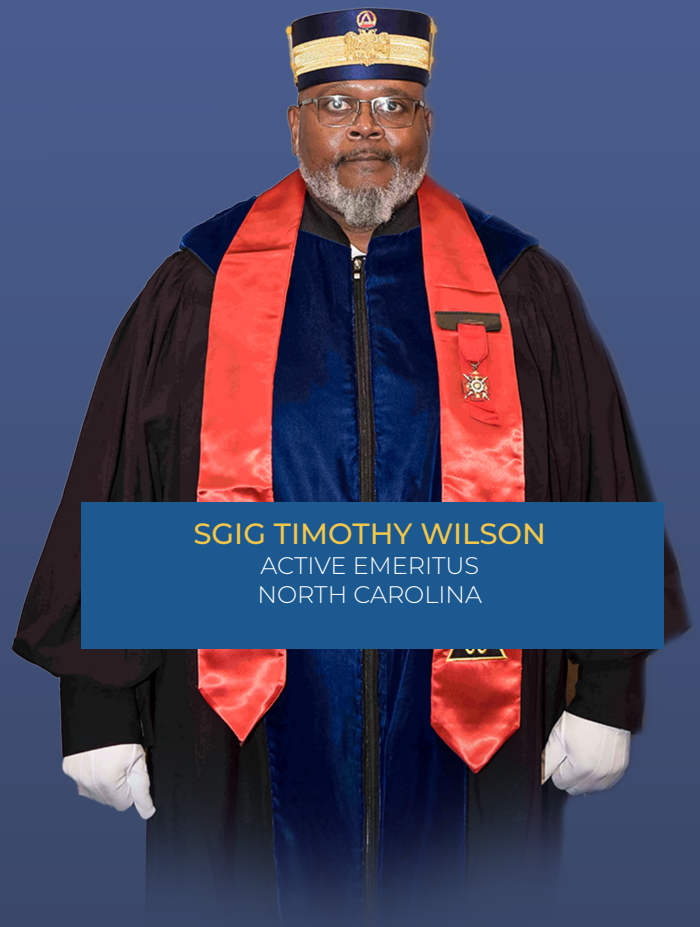
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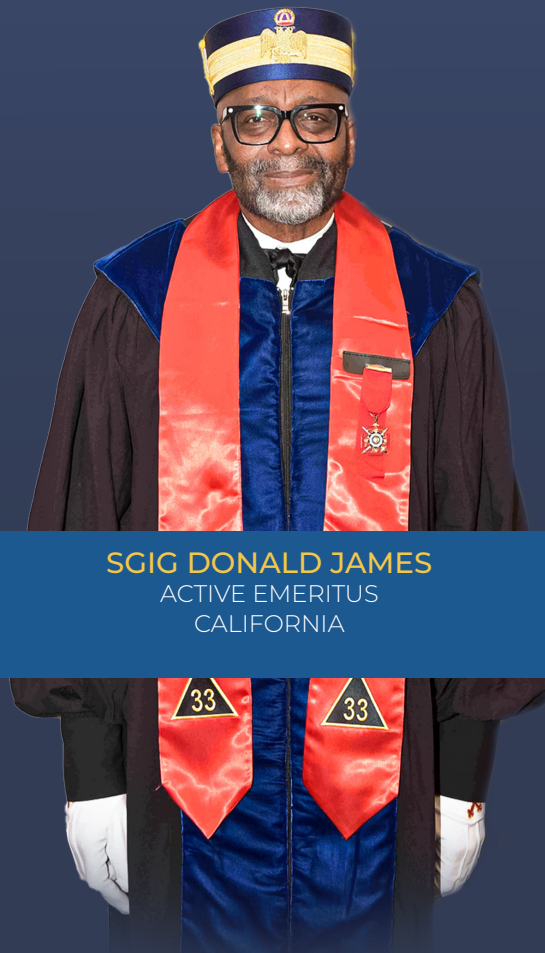
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THE CRUCIAL ROLE

OF THE UNITED SUPREME COUNCIL CHARITABLE FOUNDATION AND THE VISION FOR FUTURE IMPACT

By Illustrious Gregory Clark | President of the USC Charitable Foundation, Inc.

Introduction

The United Supreme Council Charitable Foundation stands as a beacon of hope and philanthropy, dedicated to making a meaningful impact on communities and individuals in need. Under the leadership of its new president, COL (ret) Gregory L. Clark, a strategic approach has been initiated, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive six-month assessment to pave the way for a visionary strategic plan. This endeavor reflects a commitment to elevating the Foundation's effectiveness and ensuring a sustainable impact on the lives it touches.

Historical Significance

Founded with a mission to address social challenges and foster positive change, the United Supreme Council Charitable Foundation has a rich history of philanthropic efforts. Over the years, the Foundation has played a pivotal role in supporting education, healthcare, and community development initiatives, leaving an indelible mark on society.

New Leadership and Vision

The election and installation of a new president marks a turning point for the Foundation. With a fresh perspective and a commitment to excellence, President Clark envisions a future where the Foundation becomes a dynamic force for transformative change. Recognizing the need for a strategic roadmap, President Clark prioritized a rigorous six-month assessment to evaluate current programs, partnerships, and impact metrics.

The Six-Month Assessment

The comprehensive assessment will delve into various aspects of the Foundation's operations. This includes evaluating the efficiency of existing programs, assessing the reach and impact of initiatives, scrutinizing financial sustainability, and gauging stakeholder engagement. By conducting a thorough examination, the Foundation aims to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that will inform the subsequent development of a robust strategic plan.

Stakeholder Collaboration

The success of any charitable foundation is deeply intertwined with effective collaboration with stakeholders. President Clark will emphasize the importance of engaging with beneficiaries,



partnering organizations, donors, and community leaders. This collaborative approach ensures that the Foundation remains attuned to the evolving needs of the communities it serves, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for positive change.

Strategic Planning for Long-Term Impact

The ultimate goal of the six-month assessment is to lay the groundwork for a visionary strategic plan. This plan will serve as a roadmap, guiding the Foundation's actions and initiatives over the coming years. By aligning goals with emerging social challenges and adopting innovative approaches, the Charitable Foundation aims to enhance its effectiveness, reach, and long-term impact.

Conclusion

The United Supreme Council Charitable Foundation's commitment to philanthropy and positive societal transformation remains unwavering. Under the visionary leadership of President Clark and the Executive Board, the Foundation's six-month assessment and subsequent strategic plan are poised to elevate its impact to new heights. As the Foundation continues to evolve, its dedication to creating lasting change stands as a testament to the enduring importance of charitable initiatives in shaping a better future for all.



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ORAL HEALTHCARE DISPARITIES

AND THE SYSTEMIC LINK

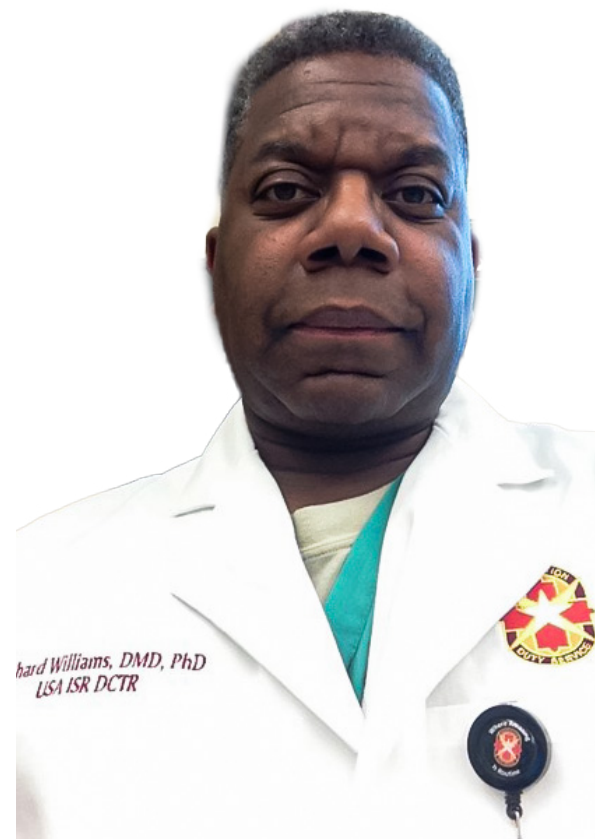
By *Illustrious Richard L. Williams*

Introduction

Social, economic, and cultural influences. Racially disparate clinical decisions. Ambiguous and devalued patient input. Stereotyping and bias (conscious and sub-/unconscious). Downplaying diagnoses or ignoring serious clinical markers. Each of the previously listed factors has a common connection – healthcare disparity. Each one can function in a causative manner to influence differential treatment of a certain demographic of patients. The purpose of this article is to: (1) address the importance of identifying healthcare disparities within minority communities and (2) briefly discuss understanding the oral systemic link in managing overall health.

Healthcare Disparities

More than twenty years ago, Dr. David Satcher, then as the U.S. Surgeon General, commissioned a report on oral health in America, with the purpose of providing information on the importance of oral health to overall health.^{1,2} Released in 2000, the report acknowledged that much progress had been achieved over the previous 50 years – likely due to increased patient education and awareness, technological advancements and access to care. However, the report also indicated that significant oral health disparities still existed between different racial/ethnic groups.¹ In addition, a 2004 report by the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, showed that Black men (51%) are more likely to have untreated dental problems, including advanced periodontal diseases, than are White men (28%), and that Black men, are 1.5 times more likely than White men to have missing teeth.³ Dr. Satcher's report "was a first-of-its-kind publication examining how oral health relates to overall well-being."² In 2018, a second oral health report was commissioned, as a comprehensive study to follow up on the original report, because oral health challenges, and disparities in who has access to oral health care – in terms of race, age, and geographic location – still exist.² Health disparities have been defined as "differences in the quality of health and healthcare across racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups."⁴ Currently, in the United States, people living in poverty and communities of color are still disproportionately burdened with dental decay, periodontal disease, and oral cancer,² as well



Racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare are important for a number of reasons. They pose significant moral and ethical dilemmas for the US healthcare system. As a nation, we have an abundance of healthcare facilities, cutting edge technologies and pharmacotherapeutics and other assets that are the envy of the world, but which are not accessible for a myriad of reasons to all segments of the population. Also, healthcare as a resource is tied to various notions of social justice, opportunity, and quality of life for our patients, our communities, and the nation at large. A closely allied concern is the nation's economic well-being, which is both directly and indirectly tied to the health status of our population in general, and of specific population groups in particular. As a result, inadequate, inaccessible, and/or poor medical care further exacerbates increasing healthcare costs that have broad implications for the overall quality of care experienced by all Americans.

as other associated disease processes throughout the body, like diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure. The fact that oral health has been the focus of two Surgeons General's reports may hold special significance, to indicate that the crucial relationship between oral health and general health is now better recognized.² That is, *the Oral-Systemic Link*.

The Oral-Systemic Link

There are approximately 800 species of bacteria that have been identified in the oral cavity, and periodontal disease is the most common oral condition in the population.⁵ There is mounting evidence to support a strong connection between periodontal disease and other chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and osteoporosis⁶ Periodontal disease (also known as periodontitis, gum disease or pyorrhea) is a multifactorial, polymicrobial, chronic inflammatory disease that affects the supporting structures of the teeth, eventually leading to tooth loss, and is initiated by dental plaque. The disease-causing bacteria associated with periodontitis^{7,8} can spread throughout the body and lead to a host of problematic health issues, such as diabetes, respiratory disease, osteoporosis, and hypertension.^{9,10, 11, 12}

A bidirectional relationship is thought to exist between diabetes and periodontal disease, and when diabetes is not well-controlled, periodontal disease can enhance insulin resistance and interfere with control of blood sugar.^{9,13} In addition, periodontal therapy has been shown to improve glycemic control in diabetic patients.^{9,14} Furthermore, research has shown that if you have periodontal disease, you may have an increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and infective endocarditis. "Even with early periodontal dis-

ease, bleeding gums can offer significant opportunity for harmful bacteria to enter your bloodstream" - resulting in inflammation in the arteries, and eventual build-up of fatty deposits and formation of blood clots that can block your arteries, and even trigger a heart attack or stroke. A systematic review conducted in 2008, found that periodontitis is a risk factor for coronary heart disease,¹⁵ and one meta-analysis found that periodontal disease causes a 19% increase in the risk of cardiovascular disease.^{6,15,16}

Research has shown that bacteria found in the mouth and throat can be drawn into the lower respiratory tract and cause disease, infection, or worsen existing lung conditions.⁶ Bacteria that grow in the oral cavity and travel into the lungs can cause respiratory problems such as pneumonia. Investigators are searching for a definitive relationship between periodontal disease and inflammatory or obstructive lung conditions, including bronchitis, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease - a respiratory condition characterized by blockage of the airways.⁶

One of the reasons for the connection between respiratory problems and periodontal disease is low immunity. Patients who experience respiratory problems generally have low immunity, meaning bacteria can easily grow above and below the gum lines without being confronted by the body's immune system. Inflammation of the oral tissue has also been linked to respiratory problems. Oral bacteria causing the irritation can travel to the lungs and contribute to inflammation of the lung lining. Indeed, inflammation appears to be the common "link" between periodontal disease and other systemic diseases. See figure 1.

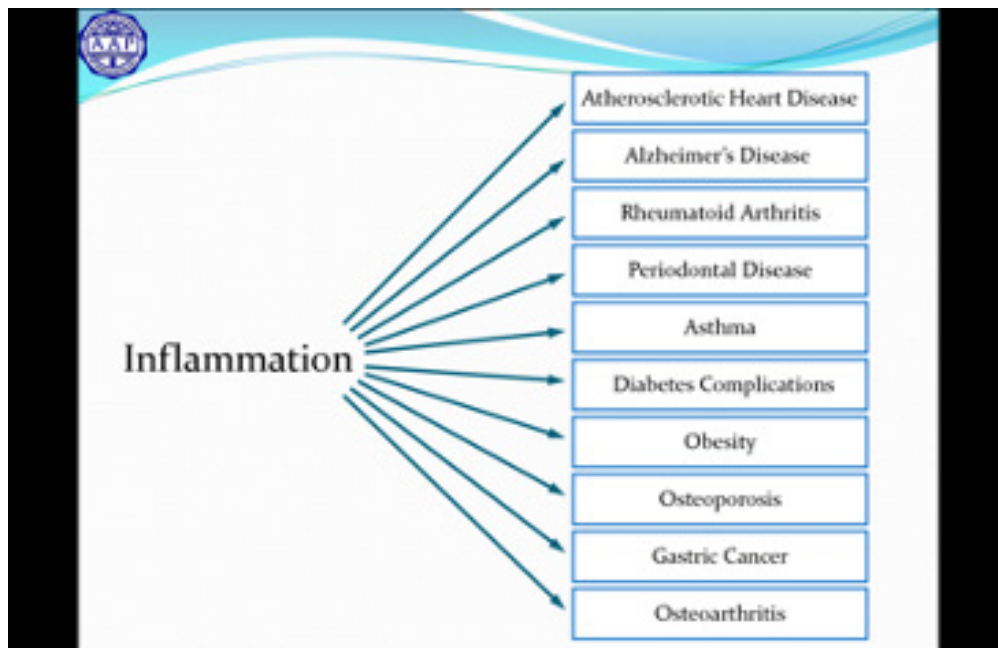


Figure 1. Inflammation as the common "link" between periodontal disease and other systemic (inflammatory) processes.¹⁷

Finally, the official position of the American Dental Association on Oral-Systemic Health serves as a useful guide for considering oral and systemic interactions:

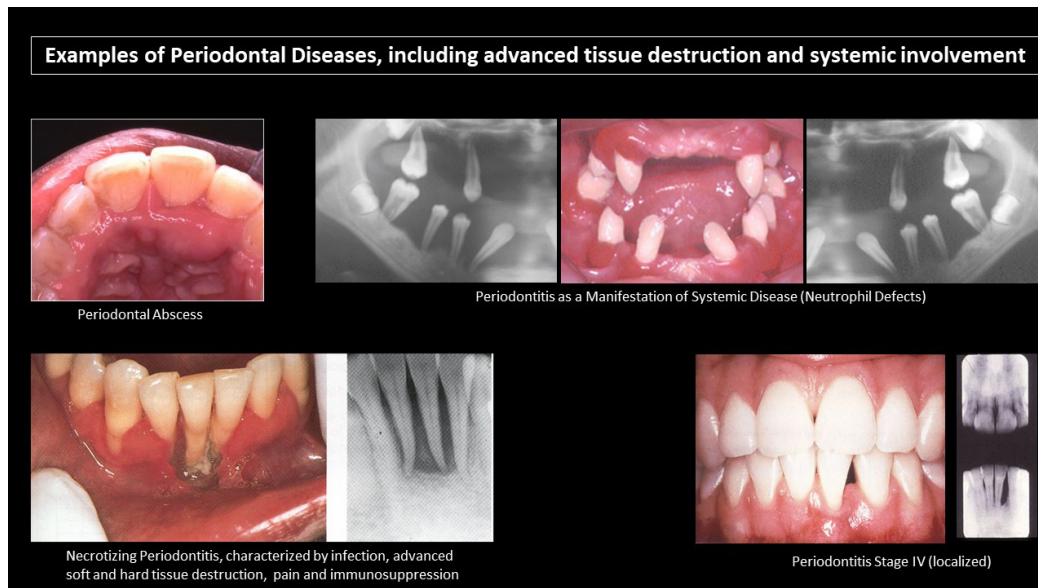
1. Periodontal disease has been associated with a number of health conditions, including heart disease and diabetes.
2. While a number of associations have been found between periodontitis and systemic conditions, finding direct causality remains elusive.
3. Periodontal and systemic diseases share many common risk factors, including smoking and poor diet.
4. Many diseases and conditions can affect oral health, systemically. Systemic conditions that can affect oral health include: (a) Alzheimer's disease and dementia; (b) chronic kidney disease; (c) diabetes; (d) osteoarthritis; (e) osteoporosis (including treatments); (f) radiation therapies; (g) dry mouth and dry eyes syndromes; (h) sleep disorders (like sleep apnea); (i) genetic diseases; and (j) Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
5. "The relationship between diabetes and periodontal disease is seen to be bidirectional, meaning that hyperglycemia af-

fects oral health while periodontitis affects glycemic control."^{18, 19, 20, 21, 22}

6. "Obesity and other systemic inflammatory conditions, often exacerbated by stress or smoking and poor oral health maintenance may contribute to periodontal breakdown and osteoclastic activity."^{23, 24, 25}

Conclusion

This article endeavored to conflate two critical health issues which significantly impact minority communities – healthcare disparities and the oral-systemic link. It is important to understand that barriers to equitable healthcare, which impact the livelihood, opportunities, and longevity of certain demographics, still exist. Likewise, it is critical to understand that the mouth is an important organ, which affects our overall health. A disease in the mouth is inherently a disease in the body. Oral diseases are interrelated with systemic diseases at cellular (and molecular) levels, which requires addressing the entire patient – both (or all) conditions – in order to effectively manage either.



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WALK IN VICTORY

By Illustrious Eric Konohia
Staff Writer

USC Webinar: Men's Health

Derek L. Holt, DNP, FNP-BC, ENP-BC who is the Director of Family Nurse Practitioners Program of the University of Mississippi Medical Center stated during the Sovereign Grand Commander's Webinar series on Men's Health in June 2023, "If you live a long life, you will get prostate cancer; but you should not die from prostate cancer." However, this is a startling reality for us, particularly since black men are at a higher risk.



Introduction

This is an interview of GIG Leslie Walker, 33^o, Past Commander-in-Chief of Johnnie L. Doctor Consistory No. 18, Orient of the District of Columbia (D.C.), who, when faced with the diagnosis of prostate cancer, failed to lay down his sword. Instead, he picked up a Royal Axe and truly became the living example of Loving God with all his heart, mind, and strength.

Dedication to USC

GIG Walker demonstrated unwavering dedication to the Orient of D.C. and the United Supreme Council, SJ, even while courageously undergoing treatment for prostate cancer. He guided his team of brethren, following directives from the Secretary General's office, to meticulously prepare the venues and set up the meeting room's electronics and A/V systems for both the 135th Annual Session in Memphis, Tennessee, and the 136th Annual Session in Jacksonville, Florida. Attendees of these sessions participated in a variety of programs, including executive sessions, the lecture series, the 33^o class, and general sessions. To this end, it is important to acknowledge the tireless efforts of fraternity members who worked diligently from dawn to dusk, from Thursday to Tuesday, to ensure the success of these annual gatherings. And we are extremely appreciative for his love for and continued dedication to the United Supreme Council and his Orient.





Prostate Cancer Research

During the chilly months of 2023, amidst preparations for our esteemed Council of Deliberation in the District of Columbia, I engaged in a strategic dialogue with GIG Marcus Crooks, Sr., 33°, the esteemed president of the John D. Howard Commanders of the Rite. I proposed a philanthropic pivot for their venerable “Evening with the Commanders Dinner,” steering this year’s benevolence towards prostate cancer research. I also charged him with the task of consulting the vice president, GIG Walker, for his valued input. Additionally, during this conversation, I hinted at a surprise that I had in store for the event, which was to remain confidential.

Zero Cancer

After the selection of a beneficiary organization for the Orient of D.C., we reached out to SGLLR Dr. Shelly Walker, the spouse of GIG Walker, with a request to include their progeny in the dinner as a poignant testament to the significance of familial solidarity. At a specific time during our dinner, GIGs Crooks and Walker, flanked by SGLLR Walker and their offspring, proudly disclosed their choice to support ZERO Prostate Cancer (<https://zerocancer.org/>). Representatives from ZERO were then summoned to the stage, where they graciously accepted the ceremonial cheque from GIG Crooks and GIG Walker. Moreover, this important moment in time symbolized our Commanders of the Rite’s commitment to combating this pervasive ailment.

Proclamation During COR Dinner

Following the Walkers’ departure from the stage, I approached the podium to request their immediate return. With their family once again present on stage, Frater Mark Fair was beckoned to perform an honorable task: he proceeded to unveil a scroll and solemnly read the resolution that I set forth, officially renaming the “Evening with the Commanders Dinner” to the “Les Walker Fight Against Prostate Cancer Dinner.” Furthermore, the resolution mandated an annual contribution to this noble cause by every consistory, assembly, and club. In response, the entire assembly rose in unison to honor GIG Walker and his family with a standing ovation.

Unbeknownst to us, this event served as a catalyst and opened the floodgates of camaraderie and solidarity. The following day, as our proceedings resumed, Illustrious Warren R. Whitley, 33°, requested to speak on the floor. In a chamber brimming with



“

In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud. Under the bludgeoning’s of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed.

his peers, he shared his personal victory over prostate cancer—a battle previously unknown to those present. Such a revelation inspired a wave of similarly courageous disclosures from others.

Prostate Cancer Committee

Attending the dinner and subsequent session was Illustrious Danny West, 33°, who was appointed at the 135th Annual Session in Jacksonville, Florida, by SGC Hawkins as Chairman of the USC-SJ Prostate Cancer Committee. Additionally, while enjoying a serene interval within our SGIC hospital-ity suite, West confirmed his inclination to endorse ZERO Prostate Cancer as the USC's Charitable Organization of choice. Additionally, the emotional dialogue from many fraters during the dinner decisively shaped his ultimate decision.

Interview

While aligning with the Sovereign Grand Commander's vision to highlight our dedication to fight prostate cancer and support the ZERO organization, it seemed pertinent to feature a narrative that embodies resilience and triumph. To this end, we present an interview with GIG Leslie Walker, Sr., 33°, who will recount his personal odyssey from the initial diagnosis through the treatment process, culminating in his conquest over this critical men's health challenge.

Q: GIG Walker, tell us a little about who you are. Where were you born and raised? Your vocation.

I am Fourth Generation Master Mason. Born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA. Married to SGLLR Shelly L. Walker. Have two sons who have followed the long Walker family legacy. They are Brothers Leslie Walker, Jr. and Julian Walker. Both of whom I Raised from a dead level and are members of my Lodge. I also am the "Big Homie" to one Granddaughter, Ari-Milan.

The story of my Masonic Heritage begins with my parents, who are the late Past Master Henry L. Walker, III and the late Past Matron Annie Walker. My Grand Parents the late Past Master Henry L. Walker, Jr. and Past Matron Helen Walker and then I have my Great-Grand Parents Past Master Henry L. Walker, Sr. and Past Matron Laura Walker. These men were all members of the same Grand Lodge, MWPHGL of PA, and the women were all members of the same OES Grand Chapter, Deborah Grand Chapter of PA.

Whenever I am asked, "How long have you been a Mason?" I respond with, "All of my life, I was born into it." I am retired from the US Air Force, currently an Air Force Civil Servant, working as a Deputy Community Readiness Consultant Supervisor.

Q: What were the circumstances surrounding your initial diagnosis of prostate cancer?

It started in May of 2021, with me being clumsy and falling down some stairs in my home. I twisted my knee to the point I made an appointment at the VA to see if I had really jacked it up. My doctor scheduled for me to get x-rays and he stated that I needed to do some lab work since it had been over 2 years since it was last done. After about a week and half later the doctor called me to tell me that I hadn't done any significant damage to my knee and that I had just sprained it and I would be fine but he wanted to talk about something more important. He mentioned that in 2019, my PSA level was .04 ng/mL and then after these most recent tests my level came in at 17.4 ng/mL. The doctor explained that a PSA level above 3 ng/mL may suggest the need for further testing. Which, at that point, I was scheduled for a biopsy, where 8 of the 12 samples taken came back positive for cancer. And then, on December 7, 2021, I had my surgery. I had what is known as Robotic Prostatectomy. I look back on this and wonder, what if I hadn't fallen? Where would I be?

Q: Can you put into words your first reaction after the initial diagnosis before you shared the diagnosis with your family?

My first reaction was this can't be happening to me. It was like my world had just imploded. In, January 2019, I lost my mother to Cancer. December 2020, I lost my father to kidney disease and here it is May 2021, and I am being told I have cancer. Descriptives to use would be disbelief, fear, anger, betrayal and scared. It was like my world had just imploded. Before my diagnosis, I always thought prostate cancer was an old man's disease and here I was only 54 years old. This can't be happening to me.

Q: How did you tell your family and how did they take it?

Breaking this news to my wife was hard; she has been my "ride or die" for 32 years at the time. I didn't try and sugar coat it. I just came out and told her what the doctor told me and she said, "We are going to beat this

and get through it." Telling my sons and my older brother was a little harder because of the relationship that we all have and all of us still dealing with loss of my parents; and now having to hear this. But they too were supportive and reassured me that God has a plan to bring US through this.

Q: Did you decide outside of your family who you would share the diagnosis with or was that not a concern for you during your treatment phase.

I have a very close network of friends. Some of them I told individually and others collectively on a conference call. They were worried, but they too stand at the ready if ever needed.

Q: What was the process you went through for your doctor to decide your best treatment phase?

I had what is known as Robotic Prostatectomy. In this operation, the surgeon removes the entire prostate gland plus some of the tissue around it.

Q: At this point of your journey how did you maintain your emotional and spiritual balance? I am particularly asking this so that others may benefit from what we personally saw from you during this time.

Knowing I had a support network and received prayers from many, I stayed true to my faith in the Lord and accepted that he has the last word and that for my remaining days on this earth, I would live them to the fullest and do what was needed to be there for my family. I educated myself on my disease, joined a support group of other prostate cancer survivors. I didn't know the facts. That's why I'm now passionate about talking to other men who don't know their risk. We shouldn't feel embarrassed.

Q: If you feel comfortable, can you tell us about your treatment. How often, how long per session and the extent of your treatment protocol.

I would get up go about my daily routine of going to work and then every day at 11:00 a.m. I would drive to the D.C. Veterans Administration Medical Hospital Radiation and Oncology Department for my daily dose of radiation which lasted about 25 minutes and then head back to work to finish my day on the clock. On February 6, 2023, I woke up as usual, but this day was with mixed emotions.....it was my last day



of radiation treatment. It had been a long 8 1/2 weeks.

Q: What side effects did you experience?

One of the side effects, which were temporary problems, include urination problems, erectile dysfunction, loss of appetite and some nausea.

Q: What was your process once treatment was concluded?

Now that my radiation treatment is over, I must have my PSA levels checked every three months, which thus far has remained at the undetectable levels; and after a year at this rate, I will graduate to being checked every six months.

Q: Are there any changes in lifestyle now that your cancer is in remission?

Not really, I remain active, doing everything I was doing prior to being diagnosed, sometimes doing way more than I should and not letting it hinder me. This is my credo: I may have cancer, but cancer don't have me.

Q: What do you want the fraters to learn from your experience?

My plea is that I am calling ALL Men to ask for a PSA Test at your next sit down with your primary care provider. A lot of BLACK MEN, like me, and possibly yourselves, think they're invincible. We go to the gym, we try and keep fit, we talk about work, friends, relationships, but we don't talk about a pain in our leg or a change in

our body. Ex NFL star Shannon Sharpe, a fellow prostate cancer survivor, sums it the best when he says, "Let's have the Talk." Believe it or not, a lot of men die because of staying ignorant rather than opening up and going to see their doctor. Because we don't see it as an area which should be investigated by a doctor because of where it is and how you may be examined. A blood serum screening is the only way to catch prostate cancer in the early stages.

It starts with only one tube of blood to let you know where you may stand. It's really the big difference between living and dying!!!

Conclusion

The imperative of prostate cancer screening for black men cannot be overstated—given the disproportionately higher incidence and mortality rates associated with the disease in this demographic. Studies consistently highlight the criticality of early detection, which drastically improves prognosis and treatment outcomes. Additionally, early treatment enhances survival rates and offers a broader spectrum of less invasive therapeutic options. Hence, proactive screening is a vital health measure that can lead to a substantial difference in the fight against prostate cancer in the African American community.



PROSTATE CANCER

Prostate cancer is a common form of cancer affecting the prostate, a small gland in men responsible for seminal fluid production. While often slow-growing, it can become more aggressive, making early detection critical. Risk factors include age, family history, and genetic predisposition. Symptoms may include difficulty urinating, blood in urine or semen, and pelvic discomfort. Diagnosis involves screenings such as the PSA test and biopsy, with treatment options ranging from active surveillance to surgery and chemotherapy. Prostate cancer has a generally high survival rate, particularly with early detection and advancements in medical care. Prevention strategies include maintaining a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and a balanced diet. Awareness and proactive healthcare play key roles in managing and treating prostate cancer effectively.

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ORIENT OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY



Deputy Robert Glenn and SGIG Gregory Clark (President USC Charitable Foundation) and fraters from the Orient of Alabama present Alabama State with charitable donation on behalf of the USC Charitable Foundation.

MILES COLLEGE



Deputy Robert Glenn and fraters from the Orient of Alabama present check to Miles College on behalf of the USC Charitable Foundation



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Rust College receives the Dr. Allen Stewart endowment scholarship contribution from Deputy Dejohn Hampton

TOUGALOO COLLEGE



Tougaloo College receives the H. M. Thompson endowment scholarship contribution from Deputy Dejohn Hampton.



ORIENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Keeaumoku Kapu (left) and 'Uilani Kapu (right) receive check for \$10,000 on behalf of the USC Charitable Foundation for disaster relief from the recent fires that devastated Lahaina Maui. Featured also is Mahealani, Deputy Konohia's cousin, who hand-delivered the donation on his behalf.

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