



2021 GRAND MASTER'S ADDRESS
The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Belize Central
America and It's Jurisdiction, Inc.
Prince Hall Affiliated

The Honorable Jeffery G. Jones
Most Worshipful Grand Master
April 17, 2021

Giving Honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. The one who continues to bless me not because of who I am, but in spite of who I am.

To the 15th Most Worshipful Grand Master, Bishop Dr. Michael R. Moore

To the 17th Most Worshipful Grand Master, Dr. Anthony T. Stafford

To the 18th Most Worshipful Grand Master, The Honorable Walter Gulley, Jr.

To the Honorable Gardner M. Torrance, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Jurisdiction of Florida

To the Honorable E. Spencer Scott, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Jurisdiction of South Carolina

To the Honorable L Lamont Banks, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Jurisdiction of Tennessee

To the Honorable Terrence Jackson, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Jurisdiction of Colorado

To the RW Deputy Grand Master of Arkansas Mark McGraw, Representing the Honorable Cleveland K. Wilson, MWGM

To the RW DDGM At Large Carlos Cano III, of Hawaii, Representing the Honorable Joaquin M. Diaz, MWGM

To RW Deputy Grand Master Gus Harris, Jr.

To RW Senior Grand Warden Kendall T. Moore

To RW Junior Grand Warden Dr. Marlon S. Honeywell

To RW Grand Treasurer Melvin F. Wright

To RW Grand Secretary Tommie Wright

To the Grand Chaplains and Clergy of this Great Jurisdiction - To the Elected Grand Trustees

To all of Visiting Guests and Dignitaries - To all Appointed Grand Lodge officers

To each of our Department Heads in their respective places

To All Worshipful Masters, Past Masters, Wardens, Brothers all,

GOOD AFTERNOON!!!!

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. I stand before you for the first time of my tenure as your 19th Most Worshipful Grand Master of this MW Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Belize, Central America, and Its Jurisdiction to present to you the current status of Florida Prince Hall Masonry as well as my stewardship over the last eight (8) months since my election in August of 2020. Though life has presented many challenges over the last year, I am not deterred nor discouraged. For I know that the Lord is with me. He restoreth my soul; he

leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

In spite of life's greatest challenges. I move forward with deliberate intention. I move forward knowing that He is my Shepard, and I shall not want. Because of His Grace and His Mercy, I say to you, nothing can stop us. But before I continue, let us not take on such an important undertaking as this; without first invoking the blessings of the deity.

With that sentiment, I humbly ask Rev. Theodus Times to take us to the throne of grace as the Choir softly sings "I FEEL LIKE GOING ON".

Brothers, it is with great pride and privilege that I welcome you to this 151st Grand Communication of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida. As we come together for this auspicious occasion, let us not forget those who laid the framework for the great success this Jurisdiction has seen over the last 150 years since its founding. If we continue to put God first, we will experience even greater success as we look to the next 150 years of our existence. The greatest asset left to us by our Masonic forefathers, was erected in 1912, located at 410 Broad Street in Jacksonville, Florida. Our Grand East, is a 6-story historical master piece that yet stands in the heart of downtown Jacksonville. It is an edifice with an appraised value in excess of five (5) million dollars. Many thanks to our Grand Trustees who continue to be awesome stewards of our prize possession. We the members of Florida should consider ourselves blessed having been the recipients of such a long-lasting legacy. As we sit here in this beautiful hotel, we do so in the knowledge that we are simply here because Masonry in Florida is thriving to a level that our home can no longer hold us. This is a problem that I welcome, and I pray that we continue to move in this direction.

NECROLOGY

For if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.

Romans 14:8

From the moment we enter into life in this world, we begin to die. The bible says in the book of Job: 'Man born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble. He springs up like a flower and withers away; like a fleeting shadow, he does not endure'.

This tells us that man's days are numbered. There are limits that man can not exceed. As surely as he is born, he most surely will die. If we live our lives knowing that neither of us know the day or the hour; If we live like tomorrow is not promised; then we will truly live the life that God has intended. Then and only then will we Love the Lord our God with all our Heart, Mind, and Soul. Then, we will love our neighbor as we love ourselves. I ask you to look around this room right now. This year is no different than any other year that we have convened this session. Someone who was here last year is no longer with us. And some of us will not be here next year. As morbid as that may sound, it is a fact of life that we cannot escape. Since we last met, several of our brothers have left this world to never to be with us again. Most notable among them was our newly elected Grand Secretary Brother Sandy Washington who passed just 29 days after his

election. We also suffered the loss of our long time Grand Secretary HPGM Phillip A. Robinson, who with distinction served as our Grand Secretary for nearly 40 years before passing on to glory. Finally, we mourn the loss of our beloved PGWP Brother Dwight Reynolds. Each of these brothers will not be easily replaced in our ranks nor will the void in our hearts be easily filled. I appeal to you all, let these losses in our hearts not be lost in our minds. Let us no longer take each other for granted. Treasure the time that you have with each other. Enjoy life, love family, show yourself friendly, that you may be surrounded by good friends. Life and the sacrifice of His only begotten Son is the greatest gift God has ever given us. Use these gifts to make a difference in the world. Make the dash between your entrance and exit of this life be meaningful; but more importantly let your life be a blessing to the Lord. Those whom we have lost, rest now in the bosom of God. May we someday see them again. Until then, we honor them by "Going On".

STATE OF THE NATION

The United States of America is a country with great vision. Two Hundred and Forty-Five (245) years ago, the founding fathers of this great nation proclaimed this country the land of opportunity; the land of the free, and the home of the brave. By proof of its very own constitution, the founders set out to create a **more perfect Union, establish Justice, and ensure domestic Tranquility**, they further established, as the country declared its independence from British rule; several truths to be self-evident. These truths became the foundation and founding principles of what would one day be considered the greatest country on earth. These principles proclaimed: **'that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness'**.

It was a beautiful vision..... Had it been true the world as we know it today would likely be a far better place for the existence of the human race. Two hundred forty-five (245) years ago, America built the model for what should have been. However, today this country still suffers from its unwillingness to live by its own ideals. Unable to practice what it preached, the United States of America missed the mark, took its eye off the ball, and when meeting the devil at the crossroads of good and evil, it chose the darker path to destruction. This major misstep of humanity still impacts this country today. While the country has taken measures to abolish systems of cruelty such as the slave trade and the laws of Jim Crow, it has never truly owned up to its treachery. Recently a friend shared this analogy with me on a social media platform. It is the profound explanation of the painting of a naked woman climbing out of her bath with horror and disgust on her face. **The painting is called "Truth Coming Out of The Well" by Jean-Léon Gérôme. It was commissioned in 1896.** On the surface the painting appears trivial. But the Artist's true meaning behind the painting will live in my Mind's eye forever. The analogy is this:

The Lie said to the Truth, "Let's take a bath together, the well water is very nice. The Truth, still suspicious, tested the water and found out it really was nice. So, they got naked and bathed. But suddenly, the Lie leapt out of the water and fled, wearing the clothes of the Truth. The Truth, furious, climbed out of the well to get her clothes back. But the World, upon seeing the naked Truth, looked away, with anger and contempt. Poor Truth returned to the well and

disappeared forever, hiding her shame. Since then, the Lie runs around the world, dressed as the Truth, and society is very happy..... Because the world has no desire to know the naked Truth.

Systemic racism and the oppression of people of color, is this country's Naked Truth.

Perpetrators of racism in this country are the ones who promote the lie. They do so by placing the cloths of the truth on the lie. They create affirmative action movements, yet claim it is a handout to the less qualified. They report that black and brown people are lazy leeches of government programs and yet they themselves are the greater recipients of food stamps and the need for housing assistance. Black on black crime is highlighted as major issue within the country while statistical facts show that most people who fall victim to the hands of another are overwhelmingly victims of someone within their own race. Black people have been proven to be disproportionately killed by a police officer more than any other race in the country, and yet police are overwhelmingly exonerated and cleared of any wrong doing. Non-compliance with the officer's orders is often cited as the reason for the death, the victim is blamed for their own demise as their character is assassinated via mainstream media outlets. This seems to have become a standard operating procedure for an occurrence that plays out all too often

This behavior has existed within this country since its founding. It will continue to exist until good men do something. It is then and only then that evil will cease to triumph. Good men who sit idle in the comfort that this evil does not impact them and those that they love, will one day come face to face with the reality of their complicity to the atrocities in this nation. When this occurs, they will no longer be able to turn away; for the **Truth** will then be clothed in all of her splendor and the underbelly of this country will be naked and exposed. The truth always finds its way into the light, and history teaches us that time always favors those on the side of what is just and true.

On the positive side of things, our nation is beginning to emerge from one of the darkest eras of political leadership in its history. The last administration over the last (4) four years created an enormous amount of division among the American people. It equally created confusion to an extreme level. This confusion focused around the Corona virus has arguably been the primary contributing factor to the loss of nearly 600,000 American souls to complications from COVID-19. But there is always light at the end of the tunnel and as the song says, trouble don't last always. On November 3, 2020, the American People, Black, White, and Brown alike, spoke loudly and resoundingly. They sent a clear message to the previous administration that enough is enough. We now have President Joe Biden in office along with our very first female and African American to hold the office of Vice President of the United States. Since the inauguration of President Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on January 20, 2021, the country has immediately begun to recover. It is largely because of their leadership that we are able to be here in this place today. The vaccine to combat the Corona Virus is rolling out with consistency and the president has presented plans to have enough vaccine in play by May 1st to vaccinate every person in the country. God Bless this new administration and may He grant them with the wisdom to heal this nation. I am encouraged, and "I still feel like going on".

STATE OF THE CRAFT

Across the globe, over the last year man has been riddled with life impacting challenges with the emergence of the Corona virus in late 2019. Since March of 2020 until this very moment, the Covid-19 virus has had lasting effects on the world's economy, business productivity, and the quality of human life. The measures taken to combat this devastating disease, albeit necessary, have increased unemployment, caused emotional distress, and financial devastation. But through it all, I am happy and extremely proud to say, Prince Hall Masonry in the Jurisdiction of Florida is alive and well. Motivation remains high, and there is a general feeling of encouragement throughout the Jurisdiction. The brothers and the sisters alike, have been extremely supportive of all that has been presented. As a result, the Jurisdiction is thriving.

In August of 2020 I presented a new membership program. This program was designed to promote Prince Hall Masonry within the communities in and around the entire state of Florida, Belize, Central America, the US Virgin Islands, Tortola British Virgin Island, as well as Cote D'Ivoire, West Africa. The program's primary activities included the annual scheduling of annual Invitation Only Social Gatherings with non-masonic guests, Quarterly Church sit-ins, and Community Engaged fundraising activities. With each of our 120 lodges mandated to participate in these activities, I am happy to say that the program has been well received. In spite of the effects of Covid-19; since August of 2020, using our own COVID protocol developed by our Grand Lecturer and his staff of Instructors, the jurisdiction has performed degree work, raising **61** new members, reinstating **252**, completing 6 demits into the Jurisdiction, and performing **20** heal-over ceremonies enticing Non-Prince Hall masons to cross over into our ranks. Additionally, during our regular annual return period of 2020 we were able to retain **2441** members; bringing our current membership to a total of **2780**. I am optimistic that we will hit the **3000-member** mark before the 2021 Annual return period in November. At this time, across the jurisdiction we have **82** pending candidates in Zone 1, **72** in Zone 2, and **112** in Zone 3. As the program requires, each of these candidates will need to be raised by August 31, 2021. This is the cut-off date for degree work in the Jurisdiction as we move into the 4th quarter of the year; which is dedicated to mentoring new members and scheduling new invitation only social gatherings to promote the organization. I am directing the zone coordinators to begin developing a plan to clear the anti-room before this critical deadline associated with our membership plan expires. Finally, in the spirit of masonic growth and the continued promotion of the Prince Hall Masonry, the previously imposed \$175 membership reinstatement dispensation will remain in affect until further notice. I am feeling good about this program and am excited about the possibilities once the country is back to normal and the covid virus has been defeated.

In addition to the efforts of our subordinate lodges to help grow the Jurisdiction, The Grand Lodge initiated two new online forums to promote our organization. Our new **Facebook and Instagram** social media outlets have garnered a significant amount of interest. Our list of online followers is growing daily. More information will be presented to you on this from our Social Media team later in the session.

The virtual arena and the use of video conferencing tools such as **WebEx, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams** has created many opportunities to keep the membership engaged thereby keeping the

organization viable. This year, 2 of the 3 Grand Master's zone visitations was held jointly on a virtual platform. This meeting proved that the brothers remain fully engaged in Florida Prince Hall masonry. 551 attendees were present to worship with and receive instruction from the Most Worshipful Grand Master. Additionally, we held a virtual St John the Evangelist Day in December of 2020 and a "150 years of History" celebration event in February of 2021. These events were collectively attended by 726 of our membership. Florida has taken full advantage of this outlet and the reward has been a jurisdiction that is thriving in the midst of a Global Pandemic. For that I am grateful..... Florida is Going On.

MASONIC PROPERTIES

Over the last 36 years of which I have been a member of this great Jurisdiction, I have watched time and time again; the Grand Masters and the Grand Trustees appeal to the subordinate lodges of this Jurisdiction to allow the Grand Lodge to be co-deed holders of each subordinate property. The members have vehemently rejected this concept, electing to submit to the rhetoric that the Grand Lodge will take your property. In my many years of masonry, I have never seen the Grand Lodge take a subordinate Lodge's property, nor have I witness any attempt by the Grand Lodge to do the same.

That said, what I have seen far too often is a lodge getting itself into financial tax debt beyond its ability to pay. Then, they request the assistance of the Grand Lodge to settle the debt with their respective tax collector to avoid the loss of the property.

I have equally witnessed on more than one occasion several subordinate Lodges with several trustees listed as the owner of the building. Over time ownership is never changed. After the last of the trustee has passed on, there are then no recorded owners leaving the family members of the last living trustee with a claim to the building.

And lastly, I have personally witnessed a Lodge with a single member holding ownership of a Lodge Hall because he paid the taxes when the Lodge could not. A gentlemen's agreement was made; indicating that once the brother is reimbursed, he would then return ownership back to the Lodge. But then changed his mind deciding to remain the sole owner forcing the lodge to pay him rent.

None of these situations needed to occur if the Grand Lodge had been co-deed holders of all properties in the Jurisdiction. But today, there is far more to consider as it pertains to the protection of our properties. The Grand Lodge will no longer seek to share responsibility of any subordinate lodge unless the following measures are taken and these stipulations are met: 1. Each lodge is to secure a current Property Insurance Policy, 2. Each Lodge must secure a current Liability Insurance Policy, 3. The Lodge must hold zero tax debt, 4. The Lodge must have filed for non-profit organization property tax status with its respective county. 5. The property must be free of code violations and be able to pass a property inspection with limited remediation. The day has now come that we must stop treating our lodge buildings like backyard clubhouses. These are our Masonic Homes and our members are men not boys. The membership of each Lodge is expected to work to maintain and care for the properties that they own. Our Masonic Homes

should be one of our top priorities and should be cared for in a manner that presents an attitude of Pride in Prince Hall Masonry.

FRATERNAL RELATIONS

In 2019, our 18th Most Worshipful Grand Master closed out the process of establishing an Amity Agreement with our mainstream counterparts of Florida. As of today, our two Grand Lodges, after 150 years of our existing has agreed to mutual recognition of masonic regularity. The agreement allows the members of both orders to now converse on the subject of Masonry and display mutual respect and brotherly love for one another. However, the agreement has not yet permitted any joint meetings or fellowship among the members except on a Grand Lodge level. That said, this agreement has still opened many other doors and opportunities for Florida to expand its Fraternal Relationships. In 2020 upon my election, I appointed the first ever Grand Chancellor of this MW Grand Lodge. HPGM Carl Finerson currently holds that title and is also the chairman of our newly formed Committee on Foreign Relations and Amity. Currently Brother Finerson and his committee is evaluating and will eventually make recommendations on the recognition and fraternal relations requests that have been submitted to us from both France, and Lebanon. I am excited and elated with the work that this committee is doing. HPGM Finerson is doing a great job in his new role. I am grateful for his support and hard work. That said, it is important that when conversing and negotiating with the Grand Chancellors and/or Grand Ambassadors of other established Grand Lodges, our representative must hold a title that gives him the same level of respect and authority as those he converses with. Therefore, I am hereby reclassifying Brother Finerson's title as Grand Chancellor to **Right Worshipful** Grand Chancellor to be used in all future correspondence as our proclaimed expert on Foreign Relations & Amity

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All masonic orders working as concordant or appendant bodies to the MWUGL of Florida will submit a copy of its Bylaws to the Grand Lodge Bylaws subcommittee for review of alignment with the MWUGL and receive recommendations as necessary. These will be submitted no less than 30 days post Grand Session.
2. Establish a committee of members with video production experience to work with our social media and promotions committee to create a series of promotional Prince Hall Masonic videos to aid in further exposing the communities to who we are and what we do.
3. Each Lodge in the Jurisdiction that owns property will start a Lodge Cleanup and face lift effort to ensure Florida Prince Hall Masonry is presenting itself in a manner that is respected by the public. Lodges that meet on the property of another Prince Hall facility owner will assist with the cleanup and face lift effort. The DDGM will govern this activity for compliance.
4. I am Proposing that Prince Hall Day now become a dual-purpose masonic event in the Jurisdiction of Florida. In addition to the annual celebration of our founder Prince Hall. I am asking all members to support and make an annual pledge in the amount of your choosing to the MWUGL Foundation on the celebration day of Prince Hall. Lodges will report these contributions to our community service committee.

In conclusion, I thank God for His grace and His mercy. Through all of the challenges presented to us in 2020, the Jurisdiction continues to thrive. I am eternally grateful to you the members of this great Jurisdiction for the support you have given me as your 19th MWGM. I am further appreciative for the spirit in which you have conducted the business of this Jurisdiction in the midst of a global crisis. We will continue to move forward with deliberate intent to succeed in all that we do. Nothing can stop us. Nothing will stop us. Cause I feel like Going on. I ask, Will you come with me.....

May God Bless each of you, and may God Save the Craft

I AM,

Jeffery G. Jones
19th Most Worshipful Grand Master

