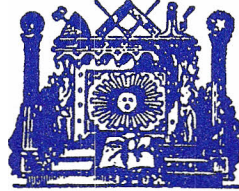


T. T. G. O. T. G. A. O. T. U.

The Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge

FREE AND ACCEPTED ANCIENT YORK RITE MASONS
PRINCE HALL ORIGIN • NATIONAL COMPACT U.S.A.



If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother."

— [1 John 4:20-21](#)

July 11, 2021

BLACK FREEMASONS AND RACISM

Hello brothers and sisters,

I bring you greetings from the Most Worshipful National Grand Lodge, Free & Accepted Ancient York (Rite) Masons, Prince Hall Origin, National Compact, USA, the Commonwealth of Bahamas, and the Caribbean and The National Grand Master, the Honorable Lee Singleton 33*

As a black man, the shooting deaths of black people is not news, as a Freemason it strikes a chord deep in my heart and the heart of Freemasonry. Freemasonry is based on tolerance, acceptance, the basic requirement is one's belief in a supreme being. Ultimately Freemasonry is a fraternity, a brotherhood, according to its precepts this fraternity is open to all. As a freemason we use the teaching of a person's volume of sacred law (book of faith) to make ourselves better men. Despite freemasonry being based on religion, black freemasons have faced opposition in the United States since its inception.

The Constitution of the United States speaks of freedom and equal rights for all men. however, we know those rights and protection have been denied to blacks for centuries. From this country's acceptance and promulgation of slavery to its ¾ of a man compromise, gaining equal rights continues to be an uphill battle, even today in 2021. Likewise, the principles of Freemasonry teach tolerance, liberty, equality, brotherhood, and the prospect of bettering oneself, its principles were denied to blacks, in fact black Freemasons was only recently recognized by the mainstream Freemasons despite having been around since 1775.

History tells us that Freemasonry among blacks in the United States began with the initiation of Prince Hall and fourteen other “free” Blacks in Lodge No. 441, Irish constitution, attached to the 38th Regiment of Foot, British Army garrisoned at Williams (now Fort Independence), Boston Harbor on 6 March 1775, the Master of the Lodge being one Sergeant J. Batt. Batt left them with a permit to “Walk on St. John’s Day” and “to bury their dead with Masonic rites in manner and form.”

Prince Hall, Boston Smith, and Thomas Sanderson, evidently aided by friends in England, secured the issuance of a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England (GLE) for African Lodge NO. 459, the Warrant being dated September 29, 1784. The warrant was not received in Boston until April 29, 1787.

What is not well known is that Prince Hall had petitioned for admittance to Boston’s St. John’s Lodge for himself and other blacks on several occasions, they were consistently denied admission. Having been rejected by colonial Freemasonry, Hall and 14 others sought and received initiation into masonry through Irish Lodge No. 441. By 1791 there were at least thirty-four members in the Prince Hall black lodge, still the lodge and its black members were overlooked and rejected by the white Boston Freemasons of their time.

A continued struggle

In 1875 the white Ohio Masonic Freemasons were preparing to celebrate the nation’s upcoming centennial in 1876. The Grand Lodge of Ohio, Free and Accepted Masons documented their preparation in a book entitled; “New Day-New Duty”, the main premise of the book was whether they should recognize and include black men claiming to be Freemasons in Ohio in their upcoming centennial Masonic celebration.

Page four of the book states the following:

The Brotherhood of Man

“All men are brothers, and each is responsible for the federative humanity, which puts the bar of exclusion on none. New principles of government could not assert themselves in one hemisphere without affecting the other. The very idea of the progress of an individual people, in its relation to universal history, springs from the acknowledged unity of the human race.”

In retrospect this statement is indicative of what is expected from Freemasons, it speaks of the high ideals of brotherhood, principles, and unity of humans, but once again these very principles would be denied black Freemasons.

As previously stated, the premise of the book was to inquire into the existence of black Freemason and their legitimacy to be included in the 1876 celebration. The white Ohio Freemasons reached across state lines to investigate. Below are excerpts from the various white Masonic bodies who responded.

Grand Lodge of Ohio

“Soon after this comes colored organizations in Ohio for these lodges being obtained from the colored Hiram Grand Lodges of Pennsylvania. In 1849, May 3^d, the Colored Grand Lodge of Ohio, so-called, was formed, Thomas W. Stringer, G. M., and O.T.B. Nickens, Grand Secretary, and became a subordinate to a colored **National Grand Lodge, which was formed in 1847.**”

Grand Lodge of Iowa

“In 1855, the grand Lodge of Iowa expressed its decided disapprobation of the conduct of Bro. _____, W.M. of _____ Lodge, No. _____, for summoning a reputed negro Mason, under the seventeenth general regulations of the Grand Lodge to pay dues and censured him therefor.”

“No person of the negro race should be examined or admitted as a visitor in any lodge of Mason under this jurisdiction if made in an African Lodge in North America, because all such lodges are clandestine and without legal authority. How this has come about we cannot say, but the African charter in Boston was derived by the practice of a *deception* from the Grand Lodge of England.”

“It is not proper to initiate persons of the negro race, and their exclusion is in accordance with Masonic law and the ancient charges and regulations, because of their depressed social condition, their general lack of intelligence, which unfits them, as a body, to work in or adorn the craft.”

Grand Lodge of Delaware

“Whereas a resolution at the session on this Grand Lodge in 1867 reading thus: Resolved, that lodges under this jurisdiction are positively prohibited from initiating, passing, raising, or admitting to membership, or the right of visitation, any negro, mulatto, or colored person on the United States.”

Finally, a response was received by Albert Pike, a noted masonic scholar with a worldly reputation, he was a former confederate soldier and rumors swirled of him obtaining high status in the Klu Klux Klan with Nathan Bedford Forest. Pike wrote on September 13, 1875.

“I am not inclined to meddle in this matter. I took my obligation to white men, not to negroes. When I must accept negroes as brothers or leave the Masonry, I shall leave it. I am interested to keep the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite uncontaminated, in *our* country at least, by the leprosy of negro association.”

In spite of all the negative responses, on October 19, 1875, Ohio Grand Master, F & A.M. Asa H. Battin submitted the following to the report.

“I have faith in our people, I have faith in their sense of justice and magnanimity. I cannot believe that many years can elapse before the great body of colored Masons will be recognized.

Prince Hall Freemasonry, from its beginnings has played a major role in sustaining Black America. Nowhere is this more evident than in the wars fought by Blacks for America. The

black Soldier brought with him not only his religion and his desire for true freedom, but his Masonry as well.

Buffalo Soldiers

Brother Joseph A. Walkes, Jr. tells us this:

“Prince Hall Freemasonry from its inception has played a major role in sustaining Black America. Nowhere is this more evident than in the wars fought by Blacks for America.....the Black soldier brought with him not only his religion and his desire for true freedom, but his Masonry as well.”

Prince Hall Masonry having risen from a Military Lodge has a tradition of chartering American Military Lodges that continues stronger than ever today where many Prince Hall Military Lodges can be found in Iraq and Afghanistan. And nowhere is this more illustrative than in the underappreciated mark left upon history by the post-Civil War “Buffalo Soldiers.” For it is far from coincidence that these Brave men served with such distinction under such hardships with inferior supplies, equipment, and horses. They did so because the Black soldier carried hand in hand with him into battle his religion and his Masonry.

The heyday of the Buffalo soldiers was from 1867-1898 but honorable mention is given to the 9th & 10th Cavalry Regiments activities through 1916. These Regiments were the first Black soldiers commissioned for peace time military service. They were far from the first Black soldiers to fight for America as there were 5000 Black soldiers who fought for America's independence in the Revolutionary War. By 1778 each of General George Washington's brigades averaged 43 Black soldiers.

Black soldiers and black Freemasonic soldiers have fought for this country since its inception, yet all the virtues of America and its ideas and the principles of Freemasonry continued to elude blacks.

The New Millennium

Notwithstanding the noble undertaking of Freemasonry, blacks have been shunned, called clandestine and refused the recognition of Freemasonry even when they prove to utilize the exact same Masonic protocols. To a large degree that changed on December 14, 1994 when the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) recognized a black lodge in Massachusetts.

Despite being faced with the existence of black freemasons since 1775, despite a warrant from the Grand Lodge of England warranting the existence of African Lodge 459 in 1784, despite an official *re-recognition* from the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) in 1994.

This re-recognition was at first glance a monumental occasion, nevertheless in retrospect it was also disingenuous as the United Grand Lodge of England's predecessor, the Grand Lodge of England had authorized the original warrant for African Lodge 459 in 1784, more than 210 years earlier. Nevertheless, this re-recognition was long overdue and was received with great anticipation by black Masons in the United States. What followed was a series of white mainstream Grand Lodges taking the unparalleled step of

recognizing one other black Grand Lodge in their state. However, the *one other* black Grand Lodge recognition was not universally forthcoming.

After the UGLE re-recognized Prince Hall Freemason in 1994 many mainstream lodges (white) began openly recognizing the existence of black Freemasons in the United States. They openly admitted the reason for shunning black Freemasons was due to racist views. However, the reception was lukewarm and met with disdain and continued unacceptance by many of the same white grand lodges.

A 2006 NBC News article states “But in the south, white Grand Lodges in 12 southern states do not even officially recognize black masons as brothers.”

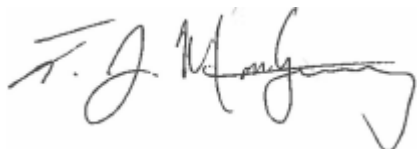
A 2009 article states “Now the issue is headed for a Masonic trial and the state courts after some lodges in Georgia sought to revoke the charter from one in Atlanta for admitting a 26-year-old African American army reservist.”

The conviction of Derik Chauvin on Tuesday April 20, 2021, for the murder of George Floyd is seen by many as just the beginning of a turning point in realizing systematic racism in America. 2020 saw many protesting in the streets and forced many Americans to look in the mirror and confront their own racism, be it open or hidden.

In the 21st century blacks still are shunned from this great Masonic fraternity, a fraternity built on the ideals of brotherhood, faith, and charity. The social injustice laid before America today has been made public mainly due to the prevalence of cell phones and police required body cameras. This was amplified as COVID-19 forced many Americans into their homes where they viewed many police killings of black men on their televisions and the internet.

The National Grand Lodge, Free and Accepted Ancient York Masons, Prince Hall Origin, National Compact rejects racism in all forms, we call on all institutions, business, government, social groups, all levels of education to recognize the part they play in systematic injustice and to take steps to end it in their institutions. We call on the great fraternity of Freemasonry to live up to its lofty principles and to fully recognize the existence of *all* black Freemason organizations.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. J. Montgomery, Sr.", written in a cursive style.

Hon. Tyrone J. Montgomery, Sr. 33rd
National Grand Junior Warden

Sources;

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New Day-New Duty, John D. Caldwell 1875

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[The Buffalo Soldiers | Freemason Information](#)