



M.:W.:Harden M. Keys Jr.
Grand Master of Masons
Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge
State of Washington and Jurisdiction

2006Acceptance Speech

It is with humility that I stand here and accept your vote of confidence in me by electing me as your 39th Grandmaster and I say to each and every one of you both collectively and singularly "Thank you".

I will do my utmost best to continue the great traditions of this Grand body and lead us to higher heights, and with the assistance and guidance from those who have gone this way before me we can only achieve more.

We must forget about the past and look to the future if we are to grow and move to that next level of Freemasonry. There is so much growth we have missed we have a lot of catching up to do. As I look out into this group of Men and Masons on this August occasion I see purpose, there is a reason why we are here this day, a Divine reason unbeknown to us.

The Grand Architect of the Universe, the all Seeing Eye knows why and I humbly thank him and always remember to acknowledge him and keep him first in all things. Family is very important and we should uphold the family and never make them second to none.

As I start on this journey, I would like to have the total commitment from each of you to love one another and respect each other's views, first and utmost. I am open-minded and very aware of the awesome responsibility that lies ahead for me and this Grand Lodge. I accept the challenge and look forward to a brighter future for us all. Good leaders are not born they are trained.

To those that have gone before me I commended you, emulated you, watched you, and learned from you, now I thank you for the lessons untaught but learned. Everyone needs to recognize that the beliefs we individually choose to live by are directly responsible for whatever quality of life we want to enjoy.

The key to enjoying peace, success, fulfillment, and contentment is putting in place those beliefs that will best produce those kinds of satisfying results. That is the challenge to each of us; to find out what beliefs allow us to realize our personal bests.

Structuring new experiences is the most effective way to create and reinforce new beliefs. Perhaps the time has come where we need to change our ways. I feel it is our time to grow in a positive way, we need to start looking into corporate sponsorships, let us not continue to work harder and get nowhere let us work smarter and get everywhere.

Re-structuring is the key to growth when stagnation sets in, doing business, the old-fashioned way is our past and it is high time we get to the present and prepare for the future. We need to set down at the table and work on new and improved strategies that will enhance this Grand lodge both cosmetically and financially.

We need to get back to 3-5 year planning and start a process to implement those plans. Our Grand lodge needs Grand lodge programs and not programs of Grand Lodge officers. Technology is the future and the future is now, we need to get on board, the information highway waits on no one.

This Grand lodge needs to be updated and not outdated; our focus needs an emphasis on future growth in the world of computers. Our overseas lodges need to be able to get the assistance of their Grand lodge now and not tomorrow. Our membership is getting older and should not be forgotten; they have paid their dues and toiled in the vineyards they deserve respect and honor.

This Grand lodge needs to work on programs that will bring assurance that when we get older, and one day we will, be assured that there are measures in place that we no longer have to continue paying dues or taxes to our local lodges or the Grand lodge. This should be automatic when one reaches a certain age.

We need to improve member effectiveness by giving the kind of opportunities to tap their own creative resources then we can set realistic goals. We need to bring out the great energy and talents of our members and then and only then will we find a common cause and sense of direction through the many changes that take place from one generation to another.

As I stated, we need to define our roles and set up strategies that will ensure that this Grand lodge will be kept sound until time immemorial. As I stand here today, I am mindful that this opportunity -- like all the opportunities in Prince Hall Masonry -- is the legacy of those who came before us. I certainly have many people to thank personally for the legacy that was given to me.

We all have a chance to have a positive influence in the lives of others. We all have personal legacies for the people we know and love; we have a special obligation to leave an even larger legacy of opportunity, prosperity, and optimism. It is our responsibility to pass on what we inherited, not to squander, but to build on.

Many have asked how I can govern without a clear mandate from the Brethren; I believe this body has given all of us a mandate -- a mandate to overcome our differences, and to solve the problems facing Prince Hall Masonry in and for the state of Washington.

Truly, the challenges we face are not political challenges or personal challenges. In fact, they are challenges of figuring out how to take care of each other and create a future that is worthy of all of our children. It is healthy to have differences of opinion about how to rise to these challenges. It is unhealthy to let those differences paralyze us.

We can leave our legacy only if we are willing to change, to go beyond partisan labels and to solve the problems facing Prince Hall Masons in and for the State of Washington. We want a wholesome culture that makes the most of our diverse heritage. In addition, we want a clean and sustainable environment that contributes to the quality of life as a Prince Hall Mason.

I will listen carefully to suggestions from the craft on how we can move forward with improvements. We all agree there is a need for change in Prince Hall Masonry worldwide. I will propose to establish a new management accountability and performance approach in Prince Hall Masonry in the state of Washington for short. We must hold management accountable.

Change is coming. Change is here. I am willing to be that Change. We will require lodges to be more effective and efficient in achieving results, and ensuring that lodges are progressing and performing wisely. This is a significant challenge. Change involves measured risk. If you are succeeding 10 times out of 10, you are not taking enough risk.

So I want to say that I am willing to take risks, and I'm willing to tolerate failure as long as we admit it, can learn from it and keep moving forward. I will challenge lodges to take good risks, and to pursue innovative changes that make life better for its members. There will be some failures, but we will learn from them and move on.

I know that all I have talked about today adds up to a very ambitious agenda. However, we live in a time when anything less would be insufficient. We need to set an ambitious agenda, but at the same time, we need to be honest. We cannot achieve all our goals overnight.

We will need enormous patience and persistence, not just for a single Masonic year, but also for the long term. We must not promise more than we can deliver. Governing involves tough choices between important programs, we will not be able to do all we want to do this year. However, we can make progress.

These are all enormous challenges. Moreover, these are all of our challenges. This will require change, change in the way we think about our Masonry, and change in the way we reach out to each other and reconcile our differences. As Gandhi so famously said, we must all "be the change we want to see in the world." If we want unity, we must all be unifiers.

If we want accountability, each of us must be accountable for all we do. It is up to us to live up to the legacy that was left for us, and to leave a legacy that is worthy of our children and of future generations.

Our Vision "Defining our Roles as Prince Hall Masons, Redefining classic values and Affirming our commitments."

We, my Brethren, can do this. Moreover, let us start today.

Fraternally,

Harden M Keys Jr.
Most Worshipful Grand Master
Washington State and Jurisdiction