

115th Annual Session

The Imperial Council

Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine
of North and South America and its Jurisdictions, Inc.

Address



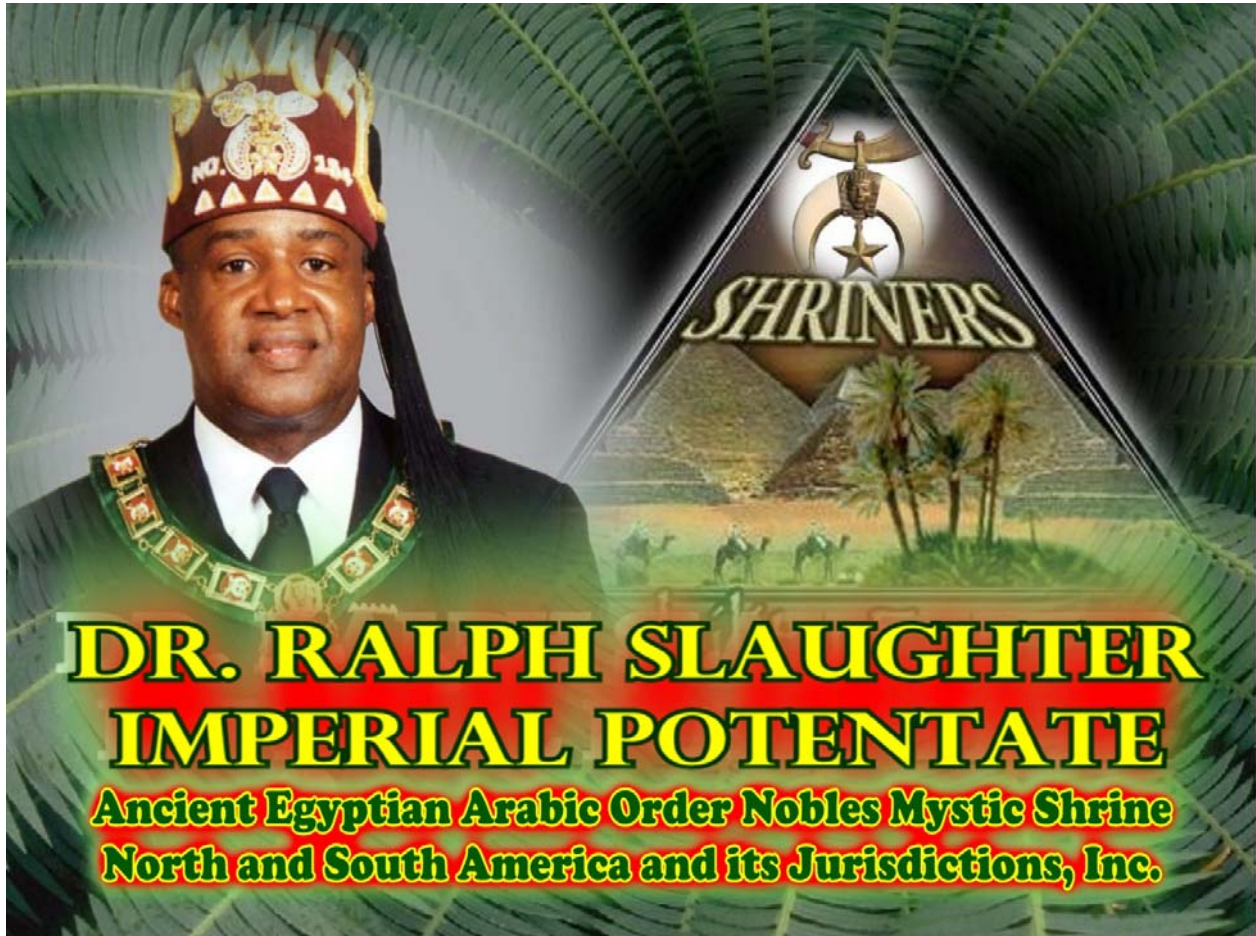
Dr. Ralph Slaughter
Imperial Potentate



August 2008
Kansas City, Missouri

The Imperial Council

Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine
of North and South America and its Jurisdictions, Inc.



115th Annual Session
Kansas City, Missouri

CONTENTS

Introductions	page 3
Necrology	page 3
State of the Country	page 4 - 5
State of the Imperial Council	page 5
Imperial Court, Daughters of Isis Health Education	page 5
Medical Education and Health Screening.....	page 5
Imperial Council Directors and Departments	page 6
Deputies of the Deserts and Oases	page 6
Imperial Divan	page 6
Acknowledgements	page 6
Official Acts and Travel Itinerary	page 6 - 7
Recommendations	page 7
Sovereignty of the Imperial Council	page 7 - 11

Imperial Potentate's Address 115th Annual Session - August 18, 2008

Introduction

I give honor and praise to God for this blessed privilege of allowing us to come together one more time as we meet to celebrate our 115th Annual Session of this Imperial Council.

Fraternal greetings to the Imperial Council Divan, Past Imperial Potentates, Appointed Imperial Council Officers, Illustrious Potentates, Past Potentates, Rabbans, and Nobles of the Constituent Temples of the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine of North and South America and its Jurisdictions, Inc.

I also welcome Sovereign Grand Commanders Deary Vaughn and Solomon Wallace, Sr., of the United Supreme Councils of the Southern and Northern Jurisdictions, PHA, General Grand High Priest M.E. Anthony K. Wells, Sr. of the General Conference Grand Chapters Holy Royal Arch Masons, USA, Bahamas, Inc., the Most Eminent Grand Master Russell A. Earl, Sr. of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar, and to Most Worshipful Joe B. Lewis, Grand Master of Prince Hall Masons of the Missouri Jurisdiction, Most Worshipful Shelton D. Redden, President of the Grand Master Conference as well as all of the Most Worshipful Grand Masters of the various Prince Hall Grand Lodge jurisdictions.

*“Behold how good and pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity.”
Psalms 133*

I call upon the Imperial Chaplain to come and lead us in prayer as we continue to thank God for the many blessings He has bestowed upon us and to pray for His continued blessings.

(Song and Prayer)

Necrology

Since our last session, 292 Nobles were called from labor to eternal rest. We honor the memory of our deceased Nobles and we pray for their families. We remember them and their good work. The Sunday Memorial Service held on yesterday was a tribute to our deceased nobles and their service to this Imperial Council.

State of the Country

Our county is in an economic recession. The housing construction starts are down, the jobless rate is up and price of gasoline is over \$4.00 a gallon. The price of gasoline has affected the price of all goods and services that must be transported because the cost of shipping and transportation is a significant cost of production. The sub prime market crashed and the billions of dollars were lost. The number of Americans who live in poverty will increase as the recession takes hold of the country.

All eyes of the nation were on a small town in Central Louisiana last year as thousands of marchers from around the country descended upon Jena in protest of the judicial prosecution of the Jena 6 juveniles as adults for a fight at the local high school. Where there is injustice, we must continue to fight for justice.

The war in Iraq is still ongoing and we still continue to lose a number of soldiers in this conflict. We must bring our soldiers home if we do not have a clear purpose. We pray for our soldiers and their families and the safe return of our troops.

We are still very concerned about the status of the Black man in America. CNN recently did a documentary entitled "Black in America" that reflected many of the issues facing Black America. One of the most troubling issues we face is the number of Black men who are incarcerated as well as those who have dropped out of school. There are more Black men in prisons and jails in the United States (about 1.1 million) than there are Black men incarcerated in the rest of the world combined. This criminalization process now starts in elementary schools with Black male children as young as six and seven years old being arrested in staggering numbers.

Who are young Black females going to marry? Who is going to build and maintain the economies of Black communities? Who is going to anchor strong families in Black communities? Who will young black boys emulate as they grow into men?

Nobles, we have a crisis in our community. The number of African Americans living in poverty is at a critical state and the number of African Americans males in jail, and who die as a result of violence is nearing epidemic proportion. We must help reverse both the poverty and the youth male crises.

We must continue to work with at-risk youth males. We must use our Shriners as Mentors program to support the youth in our communities.

On June 3, 2008, the political landscape of America changed. For the first time in American History, Senator Barak Obama, an African American received enough delegate votes to become the Presidential Candidate of the United States for a major political party. As a result of Senators Obama and Hillary Clinton bids for the Democratic Party's nomination, people of color and women are voting in record numbers in the primary elections for party nominations. Senator John McCain is the Republican Party's nominee. The Presidential election later this year will show record numbers of voter turn out. In Louisiana, we have elected our first non white governor since Reconstruction. Our United States Senate and Congressional races will be very important in each of our states.

State of the Imperial Council

Last year, we issued 3 charters for new temples and issued 10 permits to establish Shrine clubs, reactivated 3 previously inactive Temple charters. This year we reactivated 6 Shrine Clubs and issued permits to 3 Shrine Clubs. We also granted dispensations for the establishment of 3 new Shrine Temples, Shadid Temple UD in Plymouth, North Carolina, and Salah Al-Din Temple UD in Landover, Maryland and Al Muhaymin holding temple.

The number of creations and reinstatements that have been processed by the Headquarters office has significantly increased.

Imperial Court, Daughters of Isis

I am happy to report that the affairs of the Imperial Court, Daughters of Isis, the auxiliary of the Imperial Council is very good. I appreciate the cooperation of the Imperial Commandress Daughter Iris Moore, Imperial Advisor to the Imperial Court Noble Kenneth Lewis, and the Imperial Court Divan.

Health Education Medical Education and Health Screening

I strongly encourage each and every one of you to get an annual medical exam. Recent studies have shown that men, in general, do not get regular health exams and the health statistics for African Americans are worse. We have the highest incidences of diseases and illnesses, many of which are controllable with early detection. We must reverse this trend by getting physical exams and taking preventive care measures. Thank you to our medical doctors and staff for the work you continue to do to provide medical education and health screening to our members and convention attendees.

Voter Registration and Education

This is a great year to work on voter registration and education. The public interest in the Presidential election is very high. We should make a special effort in our communities to help our citizens to register as well as vote in the upcoming elections. One vote does make a difference and it may make the difference in the public policy that will be carried out in your community. We must exercise our right to vote and encourage others to go out and vote as well.

Imperial Council Directors and Departments

Thank you to the Imperial Council Directors and the Deputies of the various Imperial Departments. You have performed your assigned duties well in carrying out the programs of the Imperial Council.

Deputies of the Deserts and Oases

I give special thanks to the Deputies of the Deserts and the Deputies of the Oases for the great work you perform on behalf of the Imperial Potentate and the Imperial Council.

Imperial Divan

Thank you to the Imperial Council Divan for the professional and competent manner in which you have handled the business affairs of the Imperial Council. I am happy to report that we, the Imperial Divan, are working together in peace and harmony.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Memphis Headquarters office staff and the Baton Rouge staff for the work they do on behalf of the Imperial Potentate and the Imperial Council.

Special thanks to my family for their support and patience during the past year.

Official Acts and Travel Itinerary

I issued dispensations to form 3 new temples this year. Shadid Temple UD in Plymouth, North Carolina and Salah Al-Din Temple UD in Landover, Maryland and Al Muhaymin holding temple in Baton Rouge. My official acts regarding protecting the Sovereignty of the Imperial Council and copies of the Protective Orders are located on the Imperial Council website, www.aeaonms.org. I have

not included copies of the Protective orders in this report or listed the many meetings and travel itinerary this year to reduce the cost of printing the address.

Recommendation

I recommend that Shadid Temple UD, of Plymouth, North Carolina and Salah Al-Din Temple UD of Landover, Maryland be granted charters to operate as Shrine temples of this Imperial Council.

Sovereignty of the Imperial Council

As we gather in the heartland of America to carry out the business of this Imperial Council, we are challenged like never before to preserve the sacred trust bestowed upon us by our forebearers. We have been challenged, not by our Caucasian counterparts, who learned in 1929 from the United States Supreme Court that we were sovereign, but by our own brethren who have questioned our right to exist as a sovereign organization.

We assemble in this place remembering that Prince Hall recognized the injustices of a nation founded on the precepts of justice. He sought to join with those who claimed to embrace the tenets of Freemasonry; those who claimed to be men of the highest morals and principles. He knocked on the door of Freemasonry in America, only to have it closed due to the color his skin. Nevertheless, he did not let their allegiance to racial segregation stop him from pursuing his desire to be a Freemason, and in 1775 he began a journey of what would become Prince Hall Freemasonry, a safe harbor for African Americans that has stood the test of time.

Among the men who knelt at the sacred altar of Prince Hall Freemasonry, a separate organization was later founded in 1893, and incorporated in 1901 to participate in activities different from Prince Hall Grand Lodges, and under separate governance as granted through its articles of incorporation and the civil authorities in this country's government having the power and authority to grant sovereignty. It is this separate organization, the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine, Inc., that stands today, owing allegiance only to its members and the Imperial Council established by the membership.

I stand here among Grand Masters most of who have been guided by the Constitution and Corpus Juris of their respective jurisdictions, and who have respected and honored the right of the Shrine to exist and function without their interference. I stand here knowing that my authority as a Grand Master extends only to the boundaries of the Ancient Craft Masonry and not any other organization not legally a part of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of

Louisiana.

On the contrary, there are a few Grand Masters who have for reasons of their own chosen to exert power or authority over Freemasons in their jurisdiction, beyond the bounds of Prince Hall Freemasonry. They have taken the position that they have authority over Master Masons even on matters of the Mystic Shrine, and imposed damages to our organization. This practice has brought us to a place where we are today.

Such intervention by some Grand Masters has caused a breach in peace and harmony that should never be. The Shrine, by law, should be able to conduct its business at the national, state and local levels, owing allegiance only to the Shrine and its governance.

Although every Noble has taken the Master Mason's obligation, they are not subject to any Grand Master or Grand Lodge when it comes to matters of the Shrine. This has been a bone of contention by some Grand Masters, who believe, for some reason, that because Shriners are Master Masons, they are subordinate to Grand Lodges no matter what organization they are affiliated with outside of Freemasonry.

In keeping with the tenets of our organization and the precepts of Freemasonry, we had hoped that peace and harmony would prevail. We had hoped that the laws of our organizations and the laws of the land would be sufficient to keep our leaders and members on a lawful course.

As Imperial Potentate of this Imperial Council, it is my duty to do everything within my power to protect the Mystic Shrine and to ensure that the Constitution and Bylaws of the Imperial Council, AEAONMS are adhered to by every member of the organization. To this end, the Imperial Divan has taken action to enact such protective orders as have been deemed necessary to protect the organization and every member within, so that peace and harmony can prevail. This year as a result of threats to the sovereignty of the Imperial Council and with the approval of the Imperial Divan, I issued 2 protective orders.

I along with several Divan members attended the Annual Conference of Grand Masters on May 15-17, 2008, in Louisville, Kentucky. We had a long discussion with the Grand Masters about the relationship of the Grand Masters and the Grand Lodges with the Imperial Council. I received a few days ago and had a chance to review the minutes of the Grand Master's conference. One of the Regional Conferences of Grand Masters submitted position papers that included topics such as "Grand Masters authority over appendant bodies, primarily the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine, Inc, aka AEAONMS", and as I read

that, I realized that what we actually needed was more education about what the relationship should be between the Imperial Council and the Most Worshipful Grand Master.

On May 17, 2008, 40 of the 44 Grand Masters signed a letter from the Conference of Grand Masters indicating they would withdraw fraternal recognition of the Imperial Council if I did not rescind the Protective orders within 30 days. Recently, I received letters from the Grand Masters of Kentucky and Connecticut indicating they were withdrawing fraternal relations with the Shrine.

The Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas at its Annual communication on June 21, 2008 essentially passed 2 resolutions at the request of its Grand Master. One was to extend recognition and fraternal relations to the Grand Lodges of England and Texas, their Caucasian brothers and another resolution that states that, "Whereas the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas does not interfere in the affairs of the Imperial Council, AEAONMS..., Now therefore be it resolved that... the Master Masons of this jurisdiction hereby denounce the Protective Orders as being detrimental to the relationship between the Grand Lodge and the Imperial Council.

Be it further resolved that if at the conclusion of the Imperial Council session, the issues are contrary to the Constitution of the Most Worshipful Prince hall Grand Lodge of Texas remain enforce, that the Grand Lodge or "Ad-Interim" by the Grand Master, take the necessary actions to uphold the Constitution of the Grand Lodge,

Be it further resolved that this resolution and any action taken by the Grand Lodge and or Grand Master is not intended to interfere with the right of the Imperial Council to make rules concerning its governance or the right of the members of the Imperial Council to decide whether or not they will be members of that organization..."

After reviewing the 2 resolutions passed by the Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Texas, I thought how ironic it was, that they would be granting fraternal relations to another sovereign body but preparing to withdraw fraternal relations with the Imperial Council, our sovereign body that include members who belong to their Texas Jurisdiction. What it did was to make me realize that we had a need for more education.

What is the existing "fraternal relations" between the Shrine and Most Worshipful Grand Masters and Grand Lodges? "Fraternal relations" are courtesies extended to various organizations, whether or not they are Masonic. It is a traditional recognition that dignitaries of major organizations deserve respect and honor,

and that in many cases invitations have been extended for visitations and collaboration in certain activities. In no case has "fraternal relations" been anything but a mutual relationship between sovereign organizations, each having the right to participate or not participate.

As I indicated to the Grand Masters at the Grand Master's conference, there will be no compromise on the issue of Sovereignty of the Imperial Council. Now is the time to bring about the true meaning of Jubilee Day. We must be free.

We are assembled in this place to take care of the business of our beloved organization. In this place we are clear as to the organizational structure and lines of authority. In this place, we are dedicated to continuing the journey of those stalwart Nobles gone before us.

We are accepting the challenge to educate and motivate every member, so that there will be no doubt who we are and to whom we owe allegiance. We will make sure that every Noble of the Shrine will be able to exercise every right that is his. Every Noble will know that he belongs to an organization that is sovereign and independent, and subject only to the Constitution and Bylaws of this Imperial Council.

I have taken the time and reflected much, and thought about what has happened in the last year. And I recognize that what is needed more is education. What is also needed more is that all of our leaders come together and put our egos down as we work together for the good of the organization.

On yesterday, I met with Grand Master Shelton Redden, President of the Grand Master's Conference and we shared those thoughts and we have agreed that it is in the best interest of everyone to have a summit between the Grand Masters and the Imperial Divan to work out a fraternal relations agreement that will be approved and included in the Constitutions of the Grand Lodges and the Imperial Council. We have agreed that there are common ground for the issues between the Imperial Council and the Grand Lodges.

We have agreed to start working immediately on a framework and that the summit will be held no later than December 2008. That is a lot of progress.

Many of you have read and heard a lot of things but it shows that when our leadership comes together we can move mountains. None of us has ever advocated that we separate from Prince Hall Freemasonry, it is about how do we develop mutual respect and relationships so that we each work in our own lanes. There was a lot of discussion about how the Grand Masters were going to be treated, most of it going around and people talked about it, but no one had ever talked with me about it and so while people talked about it and wondered what

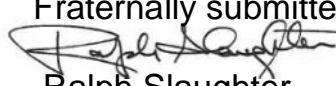
was going to happen, what you see is that, even though we have had our differences, when people come to your house you treat them with respect and with honor.

And so, even though the protective orders are out there to insure that we finish the work, we will suspend the acceptance of future applications consisting of the "was" a Mason, that was the big issue, until the summit, so we can have a clear definition of what the word means. It was never the intent of the Divan to just take people off the streets or who had been suspended for cause and who had a serious Masonic infraction that had been committed. The "was" primarily was to deal with people that had been suspended from the Blue Lodge for non payment of dues. The basic attitude was; why should we have to collect the dues for another organization? The brother had taken the Master Mason obligation but our basic premise was that we should not have to collect the dues of other houses. That has been misinterpreted by a lot of Grand Masters, so in the spirit of cooperation and in the spirit of brotherly love, we will put future applications that have "was" on hold until we can work out this framework. I think that is a reasonable compromise and I believe in my heart that all of this is going to work out because this is very important. Grand Master Fitch said that if, in 2008, Barack Obama can overcome all of the many challenges that he faces and he gets to run for President of the United States, then by God we ought to be able to do it as Prince Hall Masons.

So in conclusion, I leave you with this nugget from Dr. Martin Luther King in his sermon, *The Drum Major*, on how we can begin this process:

"If you want to be important –wonderful. If you want to be recognized –wonderful. If you want to be great –wonderful. But recognize that he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. That is a new definition of greatness... The thing I like about it: by giving that definition of greatness, it means that everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know Einstein's theory of relativity to serve. You don't have to know that second theory of thermodynamics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. And then you can be that servant."

God Bless You!

Fraternally submitted,

Ralph Slaughter
Imperial Potentate