



The United Supreme Council

Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation,
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Office of the Sovereign Grand Commander

Dr. Melvin J. Bazemore, 33°

United Supreme Council Response to Supreme Court of The United States Affirmative Action Decision

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Philadelphia, PA. **(June 29, 2023)** — Today, Dr. Melvin J. Bazemore, the Sovereign Grand Commander of The United Supreme Council, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation, Northern Jurisdiction, USA, Inc., issued the following statement in response to Supreme Court of The United States Affirmative Action Decision.

The recent United States Supreme Court decision to eliminate race as a factor in college admissions is disheartening to say the least. Racial discrimination has long been an oppressive force in the lives of minorities, especially those of African Americans. And, sadly, it continues to play that role today as if a systemic element in our society.

In light of SCOTUS's decision, the challenge we are faced with is how do we respond. The time for arguing the merits of continuing to use race as a factor in college admissions has passed. The exercise may prove to be intellectually stimulating, but fruitless in that the decision has been made.

Now is a time for action. I submit that a more practical reaction is to increase our support - financial and otherwise - to Historically Black Colleges and Universities. First, this response will have the greatest impact on those most affected, our children. Pushing more resources to institutions where race is a factor in college selection can have a disruptive effect on the educational landscape if we are intentional and consistent in our efforts.

Furthermore, we must dismiss the perception that our HBCU institutions are not and cannot be premiere institutions of higher learning. The history of the African American experience and the significant role HBCUs have played in graduating some of our most academically gifted and influential leaders cannot be overlooked or disregarded.

If Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Associate Justice Thurgood Marshal or Vice President Kamala Harris - just to name a few - had allowed others to diminish the significance of attending Morehouse or Howard, opportunities might not have been afforded them and their successes could have been capped due to a perception of their educational pedigree.

Another reaction is to further our efforts social engagement as led by the committee on Social Justice and Civic Engagement. The Associate Justices of the Supreme Court are not elected, but rather nominated and confirmed. However, those that nominate and confirm are elected. As we know, elections have consequences. If we are more deliberate in who we support, more deliberate in our

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efforts to increase voter participation, and more deliberate in holding those we vote for to be accountable, we can help create constructive change that benefits those in our communities. So, the consequence of decisions by our present United States Supreme Court that impact our sisters' dominion over their bodies and our children's opportunities for education will be met forcefully by the strong male voices that are held by the Fraters of this United Supreme Council.

The United Supreme Council AASR PHA NJ is committed to supporting our HBCUs. The unfortunate decision today by the Supreme Court only enhances our determination to support these institutions of higher education. I, as Sovereign Grand Commander, and we, as the United Supreme Council, call upon other organizations to join us in doing the same.

Yours in the Rite,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Melvin J. Bazemore".

Dr. Melvin J. Bazemore, 33°
Sovereign Grand Commander

Dr. Melvin J. Bazemore, JD, is International President and CEO, of the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Prince Hall Affiliation, Northern Jurisdiction, USA, Inc., an international service organization that is dedicated to transforming the lives of children, families, veterans, and our aging population through improving their education, health, and family economic stability.