

To the M. W. Grand Lodge:

The committee to whom
was referred the petition of Lewis Hayden and
others, would respectfully

Report:

That the petitioners are black men who,
though they are not members or initiates of lodges under
the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge, nor of regular
lodges within the jurisdiction of any Grand Lodge
in correspondence with it, still claim that they are
masons and desire to be recognized as such by
this Grand Lodge. They plead, in the terms of the
petition, "for equal masonic manhood in the hope
that we be permitted to establish our claims to masonic
rite by whatever means the Most-Worshippful Grand
Lodge may suggest."

There are three classes of signers to the
petition, namely; 1. Lewis Hayden and twenty-four others,
who style themselves "Master Masons of Boston". 2.
Anthony G. Jourdain, Jr. and twenty-five others, who designate
themselves as "members of Union Lodge, No. 7, of New
Bedford"; 3. Thomas Thomas and twenty others, who
claim to be "officers and members of Sumner Lodge, No.
12, of Springfield". The petitioners do not avowedly represent
either of these so-called lodges, or any others; so that their
statements and prayer should be regarded as expressions
of individual persons, rather than the representations and

request of the lodges mentioned in the petition.

The petition refers to the origin and progress of the so called freemasonry to which the petitioners belong; and embraces a copy of a charter which certain black men, therein recognized as masons, obtained, in 1784, from the Grand Lodge of England.

Your committee have examined the charter and believe it is authentic; but as they do not deem it to be necessary, at this time, to investigate the historical statement contained in the petition, they have not inquired whether any proper organization under it ever took place. The petitioners include only a portion of the persons who claim to derive privileges from this instrument, when it is obvious that the granting of their ^{for the reasons they advance,} ~~prayer~~ would equally benefit their associates who have not joined in the petition, and over whom this Grand Lodge would have no control. Under these circumstances, it is not advisable to inquire into the validity of the proceedings of the persons named in the charter ^{or whether} ~~the petitioners have any just claim to be considered~~ were the transactions of their successors.

When the entire body of persons in this Commonwealth, denominated black masons, shall, as lodges and as individuals, agree, in consideration of their recognition as masons, to subordinate themselves to the rules, regulations and requirements of this Grand Lodge as the supreme head of freemasonry in Massachusetts, then would be the proper season

to consider the justness of ~~any~~ claim to be
recognized as members of the masonic fraternity.

Lodges, professing to be masonic, but
erected in this commonwealth without the sanction of
this Grand Lodge, are irregular and spurious, and the
members of them are of course denied masonic inter-
course with members of regular lodges. The lodges named
in the petition stand in this relation to regular lodges,
and they and their members, including the petitioners, are
not recognized by the craft. Should however this
Grand Lodge, however, authorize, at any time, an inquiry
^{the subject presented by the petitioners} into their claims, it would be conducted in a liberal
spirit and with a disposition to accord strict
justice to all parties interested.

Our constitutions make no distinction
on account of the color of persons who desire the
benefits of freemasonry; and there are no rules or
regulations whereby the petitioners, if "worthy and well
qualified," ^{are presented from} ~~to present them applying for admission~~ ^{are excluded from}
~~into our fraternity,~~ if they seek admission through duly
recognized lodges.

Your committee recommend that the
petitioners have leave to withdraw,

All of which is respectfully submitted,
John S. Heard,

Washington Warren

Isaac H. Wright

Tracy A. Cheever