

# Respect

Cedar Lodge – January 24, 2012

What does a leader look like? Do they all look like Prime Minister Winston Churchill or President Kennedy? They were both indeed leaders. Does a senior gentleman wearing a white tie and tails standing behind the head table look like a leader? He could be a leader but not necessarily. Would, a 5 foot woman, dressed in well worn clothing with dark brown weathered skin and with missing teeth, a woman that could neither read nor write but worked as a domestic labourer spring into your mind when you heard the word “leader?” Not likely but this woman, Harriet Tubman was a leader, an Underground Railroad conductor who, led black slaves from the south to freedom in the north.

She was a leader because the slaves who craved freedom through her efforts respected her for her ability to lead them to freedom.” She was fearless and her leadership was unshakable. When she was first interviewed by Sarah Bradford she said “I had reasoned this out in my mind: there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty or death. If I could not have one I would have the other, for no man should take me alive.” She left her husband and made her first trip up the Underground Railroad in 1849. The Underground Railroad was a network of free blacks, white abolitionists and Quakers who helped escaping slaves on the run. She made her first trip as a “conductor” in 1850 to free family members and other black slaves from the south. By 1860 just before the civil war she had made a total of 19 round trips and had led over 300 slaves to freedom. She never lost a passenger. A remarkable record! She had freed more slaves than any other single person. The Southern Whites had put a \$12,000 price on her head while the Southern blacks simply called her Moses.

Tubman was a most unlikely candidate for leadership. As a woman she laboured in an era when women did not have the vote. She was uneducated and lived in a culture that did not respect the African –American.

Why did they respect her? Why was she so successful as a leader?

She was fearless, firm in her decisions, focused on only one result or goal and that was of freeing as many slaves as possible. She was fully committed to the cause of freedom and set a great example. Maxwell points out that “Tubman’s reputation and influence commanded respect and not just among slaves who dreamed of gaining their freedom.” Anyone that came in contact with Harriet knew her leadership ability and felt compelled to follow her because they respected her. With her emotional strength she fought her way to freedom and then by example returned to led others to freedom. She was prepared to give of herself and worked tirelessly. Her vision was clear; she was well disciplined and able to influence her followers. She continuously studied, learned the Underground Railway and planned well in advance as she worked to raise funds before heading off on another trip. The proof of her leadership was found in her 300 plus followers.

Worshipful Master Elect, you are better dressed and have more teeth than Harriet Tubman. You have the respect of your brethren as they have elected you to lead this lodge for the coming Masonic

year. It is now your job to go from the present level of respect to even higher levels of respect which I know that you are capable of doing.

You will recall some of your many teachers, when you attended Public School particularly the ones that you admired. A symbol of respect for a teacher is the apple. My 12<sup>th</sup> symbolic working tool for you, Worshipful Master, is an apple to remind you of the importance of maintaining the respect of your brethren. Congratulations and have a great year. If there is anything that I can assist you with please contact me at your convenience.

Laws of Leadership – John C. Maxwell

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