



Ms Rhonda
International Master 2016
Step-down Speech

Last year, we arrived in Dallas with spreadsheets, lists, timelines, diagrams and labels. We had every detail of every outfit, expectation, and requirement documented in multiple ways and places. We were prepared to represent our region, our community, our friends, and our family at the International Master slave Contest. We knew the job, we knew we had the skills and ability to do the job, and we were excited to show that at the contest.

There were also details about my reasons for pursuing a Master slave title that I preferred **not** to share during the contest process. Toward that end, one of the parameters I set was that there would be no name dropping. This was a job interview, and what was important to me was that we share what we knew, not who we knew or how they might have influenced our journey.

I stood on this stage during the contest last year and said that I embraced the opportunity to continue our work as authentic, approachable ambassadors and positive role models of Master slave relationships. I meant that, and I think we have done what we set out to do, so tonight, as we step aside to give another pair the opportunity to do the job, I want to share a little bit about why I wanted the job, and that comes with a name.

I have loved and supported the Master slave contest system and the education it provides for many years. I attended, I volunteered, I taught, I said 'yes' a lot. Except to that one question... Are you going to run for the title this year? There were many variations of that question, and my answer was always the appropriate variation of 'no.' Competing for a title was not for me.

And then one day, there wasn't a question. Instead there was an explanation. During a quiet moment when it was just the two of us, sharing confidences as we sometimes did, Ms Margaret looked me in the eye and quietly but firmly explained:

"I want to see someone on that stage who looks like me. I missed my opportunity to be the one on the stage by producing Northwest for so long. I need it to be you."

Being a Femme Master in this community is not easy and though we didn't talk about it publically, Ms Margaret and I vented about our challenges privately. Her quiet confession caught me by surprise, but her point was valid. She wanted people to see that there is another way. That Masters can be quiet, feminine, reserved, and have devoted slaves who are none of those things.

I didn't say 'yes' but I did take her words to heart. I thought about the lack of that relationship model in my predominantly male leather world. I recalled the times I longed for advice and encouragement from another femme-identified woman. I remembered the times I was dismissed or denied access because of my gender presentation. And I realized she was right... we needed someone on this stage who looked like us.

During the interview portion of the contest last year, I shared that my greatest fear should we win the title was that I would not be able to convey the message that was so important to me. That I would not be successful in showing other Femmes who aspire to Mastery that it is within their grasp. That I would not be able to open the minds and hearts of those who equate "Master" with "masculine" and "slave" with "feminine" to see that there are other viable Master/slave relationship configurations.

Thankfully, my fear was not realized. At one of our first appearances following the contest, a young woman approached me. She shared how much it meant for her to see that it was possible for someone like her to lead the type of hierarchical relationship she felt drawn to. And she thanked me for being someone she could look to for inspiration on her journey toward mastery.

At another event, a leatherdyke approached us after our class. She sheepishly confessed that when she entered the room before our class, she had assumed tomo was the Master, because, you know, butch. She went on to say that as she sat watching us and waiting for the class to begin, she saw the energy and connection between us and realized her mistake. She thanked us for reminding her not to make snap judgments about people.

I also count as a success the conversation I had with a young Master who was shocked that I – or any woman – experienced negative treatment in the Master/slave community based on gender presentation. He was eager to learn and understand, and as we talked I watched him become an ally. I am confident that he will now be more aware of and speak out against such situations as they occur in his local community.

I had an amazing year representing this title system with my slave beside me and I am thankful for Ms Margaret's friendship and her inspiration, which contributed so much to my decision to take this journey. I waited too long for her to be able to witness and share our experience, but each time someone comes up to thank me for being on this stage, for setting this example, for showing them that quiet feminine women can be Masters too, I know that she made a difference in those lives as she did in mine. And I think she would be proud of the work we've done.

Thank you for allowing us to share our lives and relationship as International Master and slave. We will be forever grateful for the experience.

Thank you, my dear slave for creating this journey with me. I sensed when we began this journey, and know now with certainty, that a year as International Master and slave is a unique experience for every pair who takes up the mantle. The job is what you make of it. And we made it quite a ride.