

YMCA RAG/LEATHER PROGRAM

THE PURPLE RAG

Instructions:

This is not a part of the ceremony and is not to be read aloud; but all Ragers who have parts in conducting the ceremony should study it carefully.

In the presentation of the Rag there is a very close, inter-personal relationship with a strong emotional impact. Your sincerity in what you are doing and saying as you take part in the ceremony and as you welcome the Ragger to this step is an element that makes for a meaningful experience.

READING

Persons with special parts speak loudly, clearly, and slowly. As you prepare, if there are words, which are unfamiliar to you, ask about them. Remember to speak in a warm, personal tone. Be sure to read your part over in advance several times so that you know what you are saying.

HOW WE LEARN

We learn best by the "feeling" that moves between us, rather than by just what we say. Show a deep feeling of affection for those whom you are welcoming into the Rag Society.

Explanations during the ceremony appear in parenthesis and are not to be read aloud.

This ceremony should be held in a secluded spot away from camp, including in any one ceremony only the number of persons for which space is available at the Ragers' Emblem.

ATTENDANCE

Preferably no more than two candidates should be involved in this ceremony. Attendance at this ceremony should be those close friends of the candidate(s).

MINIMUM PERSONNEL

Chief of Ragers – Conducts ceremony
Counselor – Candidate's leader or advisor
Blue Ragger – Reads Blue and Silver Ragger parts
Brown Ragger – Reads Brown and Gold Ragger parts
Red Ragger – Reads Red and Purple Ragger parts

MAXIMUM PERSONNEL

Chief of Raggars
Counselor – Candidate(s) leader or advisor
Blue Ragger
Silver Ragger
Brown Ragger
Gold Ragger
Red Ragger

PREPARATION:

On the trail clear an area and construct a two-foot Raggars' Emblem – one for each candidate.

There should be a space enough for one person to sit Indian fashion. Arrange to have a small light, such as a votive candle in a protective glass or a small flashlight, to illuminate the symbols. If some of those Raggars who are participating in the Ceremony are not Purple Raggars, they may remain at the small Raggars' Emblem until the close of the Ceremony. An alternative may be to hold the beginning Ceremony at the meditation points or some other area near point. At Raggars' Point, outside of the Triangle, but inside the square, a blanket for each candidate should be spread on the Ground in front of the area where the Chief of Raggars will stand. Bring a blanket, Blue, Silver, Brown, Gold, Red, and Purple Rags for each candidate.

Ideas For Making Your Rag Ceremonies Special

Use music.

PERSONALIZE: i.e., "Tom, whom do you bring?"
"I bring Kathy and Ben, who wish..."

Use readings, scriptural and others, which are personalized to reflect the individual's counseling sessions. Use them at the end, or interspersed throughout the Ceremony.

Speak slowly and clearly. Use pauses.

Be purposeful and serious; no unnecessary talking.

Open and close with prayer.

Everyone should be standing or sitting behind or to the side of the candidates when they take off their blindfolds, so they have an unobstructed view of the point.

Whenever possible, have one person guide each candidate up the trail. This is more personal and intimate than the "chain gang" method and eliminates the need for spoken instructions on where to walk.

Be conscious of rustling papers, etc. Plan ahead when pages will be turned.

Go over the sequence of events at the point beforehand, to eliminate uncomfortable pauses while we figure out "What's next."

At night, candles provide a nice light at the point if it is fire safe and regulations permit.

Put a Rag on the cross that symbolizes the Ceremony in progress.

Keep the blindfold on the new Ragers until all wishing to speak privately with him/her have had the opportunity. Ask the newcomer(s) to sit and be comfortable during this time.

Allow time after for the new and old Ragers to share some personal thoughts before the Ceremony is closed.

Leave the newcomer(s) alone at the point after the Ceremony. Be sure to tell them that you'll be waiting a few yards down the trail.

The Purple Rag – A dedication towards excellence and noble living in all Christian Service Opportunities

Ceremony

(Candidates of the Purple Rag are blindfolded and properly placed at the beginning of the Ragger trail.)

CHIEF OF RAGGERS: (There should be separate counselors for each candidate.) We are now leaving behind us the noise of everyday life. We want you to join us in a quiet and serious hour with God. I urge you to be silent so as to hear Him speak through the stillness, through the voices of others, and from within your heart. By your growth in Body, Mind, and Spirit you are ready to take this next important step in the challenge of the Rag. (Pause) You are now about to participate in the Purple Rag Ceremony and dedicate yourself to excellence and noble living in all Christian service opportunities that come your way. The blindfold merely shuts out the world around you and turns your thoughts inward and your heart outward to God. Let us now, for the next few minutes, silently pray to God that we shall enter this Purple Rag Ceremony with open hearts.

(Pause for two minutes while you silently pray. Then lead each candidate to one of the smaller Ragger emblem areas and have them sit Indian fashion and remove their blindfold.)

COUNSELOR: You have been led here for meditation on your challenges. When you became a Blue Ragger, (place a blue rag in candidate's hand) you accepted the challenge to be loyal to God, your Country, One's Best Self and this creed:

BLUE RAGGER:

I would be true, for there are those who trust me;
I would be pure, for there are those who care;
I would be strong, for there is much to suffer;
I would be brave, for there is much to dare.

I would be friend to all – the foe, the friendless;
I would be giving, and forget the gift;
I would be humble, for I know my weakness;
I would look up, and laugh, and love and lift.

COUNSELOR: (Pause) When you accepted the challenge of the Silver Rag you became a disciple of God, committing your life to Him and to His cause. This challenge consists of four great truths:

SILVER RAGGER: Should there not be enough personnel, the Blue Ragger may take this part.)

"The Spirit of God dwells within you. Your BODY is its temple.
Your MIND is the compass of your life, determining its direction. Keep it clean and use it well.
Love God with your whole heart and LOVE OTHERS as you do your "self."
Through the SPIRIT with you, dedicate your life to God and serve Him.
Spirit, Mind and Body – these three bound together by respect and love of all God's children regardless of race, creed or color and demonstrated daily in your Life here at camp and in your life at home. This is the challenge of the Silver Rag.
(Place Silver Rag into candidate's hands.)

COUNSELOR: (Use name of candidate) Here is the counselor of the Brown Rag.

BROWN RAGGER: (Use name of candidate) Do you remember these words of Saint Paul?

“Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong; but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

Love such as this is one of the four goals of the Brown Rag. (Place Brown Rag into candidate’s hands.)
The others, let me remind you, may be phrases as follows:

“Four things you must learn to do
If you would make your record true;
To think without confusion, clearly,
To love your fellowman sincerely;
To act from honest motives purely,
To trust in God and heaven securely.”

COUNSELOR: (Pause) A new challenge to deeper understanding and concern for others was accepted by you when you became a Gold Ragger. You were given the charge to:

“Listen to the voice of God!
Around you! Within you! Listen!
He calls you to grow!
To stretch your mind with new knowledge;
To stretch your muscles with clean play and hard work;
To stretch your heart to include new friends;
To stretch your soul and fill it with beauty and hope and great purposes!
Listen to the Voice of God!”

GOLD RAGGER: (Pause. Place Gold Rag into candidate’s hands. Should there not be enough personnel; the Brown Ragger may take this part.) In listening to the voice of God, deeper understanding became mine:
(Pause and the softly recite):

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace!
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury – pardon;
Where there is doubt – faith;
Where there is despair – hope;
Where there is darkness – light;
Where there is sadness – joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled, as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

RED RAGGER: (Use name of candidate) I am the representative of the sacrificial spirit of the Red Raggars:

“We believe the best and happiest life is the one spent not for self, but for others. With this for our ideal, we pledge our hearty loyalty to the principles of the Red Rag. We will be earnest seekers after the truth. We will be friends not only to each other but to all, and we will do our utmost to advance in true humanity. We will stand everywhere and always for purity and righteousness, and we will do our utmost to advance in true manhood / womanhood.”

(Pause) Do you, (Use name of candidate) know yourself? (Do not wait for an answer) Do you know your neighbor? Do you know those who have worked against you and your purpose? The Red Rag that you wear is the reminder of the challenge you accepted. (Take all other rags and place the candidate’s red rag in their hands) Here is that reminder.

COUNSELOR: (Softly) Are you now prepared to enter into a new realm of life? (THE CANDIDATE NEED NOT ANSWER). To enter into that realm may require you to offer the supreme sacrifice for those you seek to serve:

“Sacrifice is never easy. It demands the very highest in courage. Scripture tells us that Jesus faced his hour of trouble he went apart and fell on his face and prayed, saying:

“O, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.”

(Pause) The Purple Rag is a challenge to you, no matter what the sacrifice – to dedicate your will, your ego, you’re very “self” to your God and to serve Him through whatever, and service opportunities come your way.

(Pause) Are you ready to accept this challenge? (Wait for an answer.) I will lead you through the final stages of your journey. Let me help you with your blindfold.

(Blindfold and lead candidate to the outside of the circle of the emblem on the Raggars’ Point.)

SILVER RAGGER: (Blue Ragger may take this part should there not be enough personnel.) Who bring you here, Counselor, to the Realm of Silver?

COUNSELOR: Silver Ragger, I bring, (Name of candidate), who would dedicate his/her life to God.

SILVER RAGGER: (Use name of candidate), you will kneel on your right knee. (Do not proceed until candidate has assumed this position.) You are now kneeling at the outside of the circle, in the position of the Blue and Silver Raggars. I challenge you, (Use first name of candidate), to purity of personal living, to keep integrity and unrighteousness as your shield, live up to the knowledge you possess. This is the ideal of the Ragger and for which God holds us responsible. When you make a statement of your intent or purpose, do not let them be empty words; but believe them and practice them in your daily living. I cannot force you to do this, nor can anyone else. Only as you accept this ideal, believing and practicing purity, can you succeed. You may proceed to the Realm of God, may God go with you.

COUNSELOR: (Lead candidate to the outside of the square.) You will now kneel on your left knee. (Pause and aid candidate to kneel.) You are kneeling on the outside of the square in the position of the Brown and Gold Raggars.

GOLD RAGGER: (Brown Ragger may take this part if there are not enough readers.) Counselor, whom do you bring into this Realm of Gold?

COUNSELOR: Gold Ragger, I bring (Name of candidate), who seeks purity of living.

GOLD RAGGER: I challenge you to speak the truth at all times, under all circumstances stop lying to yourself and others. One that speaks the truth shows forth righteousness; but false witness brings forth deceit. The fruit of truth is joy established forever; but a lying tongue is but for the moment. A wholesome tongue is like a stream of light; but dishonesty causes separation from the spirit. Counselor, what does scripture say regarding truth?

COUNSELOR: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciple. And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

GOLD RAGGER: (Use name of candidate), I wish for you that freedom which nothing else but speaking the truth is love can bring. May you never become slave to others nor yourself through falsehood. Counselor, you may escort, (Use first name of candidate), to the Court of the Red Rag. Go and may the Spirit of Truth be with you.

(LEAD CANDIDATES TO THE OUTSIDE OF THE TRIANGLE.)

RED RAGGER: Counselor, whom do you bring to this Court?

COUNSELOR: Red Ragger, I bring, (Name of candidate), who would know truth.

RED RAGGER: Wearer of the Red Rag, have you sacrificed your time, your talent and personal will? If so, please answer, "Yes." (Wait for an answer.) I further challenge you to have courage to right wrong wherever you find it on your quest. Counselor, how did Isaiah describe this courage?

COUNSELOR: The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to free those who are bound physically, mentally, and spiritually. This is the time of the Lord's favor and they day of vengeance of our God. Comfort all that mourn in His Kingdom. Give them beauty instead of ashes; the oil of joy instead of mourning; the mantle of praise instead of the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, for the glory of God. Thanks be to God for this courage.

RED RAGGER: (Use name of candidate), our day finds many things out of order. Few people seem to know the answer to our problems. We are menaced by such wrongs as war, race, hatred, greed, disease, and hardness of heart. If you are to be a true wearer of the Purple Rag, you will work in your own way to make this a better world. You may not be able to change the whole world, but you can make some part of it better. May human suffering touch you so deeply that you are sensitive to search out the cause and help right the wrong. If you are willing to seek courage for your quest, please answer, "Yes." (Wait for an answer.) Counselor, prepare the candidate(s).

(Counselor brings candidate to the edge of the blanket and carefully aids the candidate to first kneel on both knees and then lean forward to lie prone with arms stretched forward to form a cross. When this is complete, motion the Red Ragger to continue.)

RED RAGGER: You are lying prone in the attitude of humility. (Red Ragger, at this point while the candidate is still lying prone, will pray softly, close to the ear of the candidate, and is meant for him alone, the following prayer):

“God be in your head and in your understanding.
God be in your eyes and in your looking.
God be in your mouth and in your speaking.
God be in your heart and in your thinking.
God be in your end and at your departing.”

PURPLE RAGGER: (Use first name of candidate), I am a wearer of the Purple Rag in spirit; I challenge you to follow God, (Christ), at all times. When confronted with any difficulty that may arise, pray to our Father. Take time to think of the noble act, and the Christ-like, (Godly), response.

COUNSELOR: Purple Ragger, what is the secret of following? How may we know we are on the road toward our quest?

PURPLE RAGGER: (Softly and sincerely.) God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will we not be anxious, though the earth is changed, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam; though the mountains tremble with its tumult. This is our Father’s World.

(Use name of candidate), our business is not to see what is dimly in the distance, but to do what is clearly at hand. You cannot dream yourself into a noble character, you must hammer and forge yourself into one with the help of God.

Kneel now on both your knees, the position of the Red and Purple Ragers. Think on the words that you have heard here. Decide now how you may apply to your life the ideals and philosophies, the spiritual revelations, which have been brought to mind, while you are in contemplation.

CHIEF OF RAGGERS: (Pause, and then approach candidate from distance.) Counselor, whom have you brought here?

COUNSELOR: Chief of Ragers, I have brought, (Use name of candidate), who would take the vows of the high and noble life of one who follows God.

CHIEF OF RAGGERS: Who sponsors the candidate?

(In turn each of the Ragers answers or should there be other candidates, charge each set of sponsors separately or in unison before continuing on. (CAREFULLY CHOOSE THE APPROPRIATE ONE OF THE NEXT TWO PARAGRAPHS.)

SILVER RAGGER: I sponsor, (Use name of candidate), in his/her quest for purity.

GOLD RAGGER: I sponsor, (Use name of candidate), in his/ her quest for truth.

RED RAGGER: I sponsor, (Use name of candidate), in his/her quest for courage.

PURPLE RAGGER: I sponsor, (Use name of candidate), in his/her quest for communion with God.

COUNSELOR: I sponsor, (Use name of candidate), for himself/herself.

ALTERNATIVE: (All Riggers read in unison.) I sponsor, (use name of candidate(s), in his/her quest for purity, truth, courage and quest for communion with God. I sponsor, (use name or candidate(s), for himself/herself.

CHIEF OF RIGGERS: As sponsors of, (Use name of candidate), do you promise to help him/her in every manner within your power in this challenge?

SPONSORS: I do so promise with the help of God. (Repeat for each candidate.)

CHIEF OF RIGGERS: (Use name of candidate), here before these fellow Riggers, I ask you to give a clear and complete statement as to your quest for life. You may remove your blindfold should you so desire.

(Candidate responds with previously thought out statement on his life.)

CHIEF OF RIGGERS: (Pause before preceding to be sure the candidate has finished.) You have answered thoughtfully and well. (Pause) Your fellow Riggers attest to your purity, truthfulness, courage, and resolve, and deem you worthy. Prove by your acts at all times that their trust is rightfully offered. I, as your friend, challenge you to be truly noble. True nobility does not regard the wearing of the Purple as merely an honor, but as an obligation to those who are weaker in respect and need help. May you be noble and may God be with you in your quest.

(The Chief ties the Purple Rag around the neck of the candidate and closes the ceremony.)

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