

Good evening, Ruth Jackson family.

Before I say anything else, I want to name the moment we are in.

Tonight is a full-circle moment for me.

Our keynote speaker this evening, **Bonnie Simpson Mason**, is not only a leader I admire — she is the surgeon who first introduced me to orthopaedic surgery.

Before I had the language for this career.

Before I could see myself in this profession.

She opened a door — and changed the trajectory of my life.

So to stand here tonight, ascending to the presidency of the Ruth Jackson Orthopaedic Society, with her in this room, is both humbling and profoundly meaningful.

It is a reminder that none of us arrives alone.

And that the moments when someone chooses to see us can echo for a lifetime.

Tonight, I stand before you with deep gratitude — and deep responsibility.

Gratitude for the women who came before me.

Responsibility for the women who will come after.

Because I am not just stepping into a role tonight —

I am stepping into a legacy.

And as the first woman of color to ascend to the presidency of this society, I carry with me not just my own story —

but the stories of countless women who were told *not yet, not here, or not you*.

So tonight, I say this clearly and unapologetically:

We are not waiting our turn anymore.

We are deciding what happens next.

Ruth Jackson did not merely break barriers.
She refused to accept that barriers were permanent.

She did not ask for permission.
She prepared with excellence — and then walked through doors that
were never designed to open for her.

But progress is rarely the work of one woman.
It is the courage of many.

We also stand on the shoulders of **Claudia Thomas** —
the first Black woman orthopaedic surgeon in the United States.

At a time when the doors of medicine were barely open to women,
and firmly closed to women of color,
she walked through anyway.

Not because the path was welcoming —
but because she was determined.

Ruth Jackson showed us that women belong in orthopaedics.
Claudia Thomas showed us that Black women belong here too.

Together, their legacies remind us that representation is not symbolic —
it is structural.

It changes who is seen.
It changes who is believed.
And it changes who gets to lead.

That is the legacy we inherit —
not simply to survive in orthopaedics,
but to **lead it**.

There were rooms early in my career where I was
the only woman,
the only person of color,
the youngest voice,
the one who looked different.

For a long time, I believed leadership meant shrinking the parts of
myself that made others uncomfortable.

But here is what experience has taught me:

You do not rise by becoming less of yourself.
You rise by becoming fully yourself.

And when you do, you do not just open doors for yourself —
you widen them for everyone else.

I am not here *despite* who I am.
I am here **because of who I am**.

Because excellence has many faces.
Leadership has many voices.
And orthopaedics is stronger when it reflects the world it serves.

Before I share my vision, there is one person I need to recognize.

Leadership is often visible.
Support is often not.

Quentin, will you please stand.

And no — I am not asking him to stand because he's easy on the eyes.

Although... that certainly doesn't hurt.

Every milestone I have reached has been steadied by your belief, your sacrifice, and your quiet strength.

You have carried the weight of my ambition without ever asking me to carry it alone.

And that kind of partnership —
one that does not shrink a woman's dreams,
but protects them —
is leadership too.

Thank you for walking beside me.
This journey would not look the same without you.

Now — let's talk about where we are going.

We are standing at a pivotal moment in medicine — and in orthopaedics.

Technology is changing how we operate.
Policy is changing how we practice.
Patients are changing what they expect.

And women —
women are changing who leads.

RJOS is no longer just a support system.
We are a **force**.

And my presidential year will be guided by **four core pillars** — not as ideas on paper, but as actions that move women into power, influence, and permanence.

Pillar One: Agency

Agency is power —
not the kind that dominates,
but the kind that directs.

It is about equipping our members with leadership skills, negotiation tools, board readiness, and financial fluency.

Too often, women are taught to be grateful
when what we need is to be strategic.

We do not need permission to lead.
We need preparation — and opportunity.

Because when a woman walks into a room prepared,
she does not just take a seat —
she shapes the agenda.

Pillar Two: Visibility

Visibility is not vanity.
Visibility is power.

If you are not seen,
you are not cited.
You are not funded.
You are not promoted.
And too often —
you are not heard.

I know this personally.

Because the first women I ever saw perform a joint replacement were my sisters from **Women Orthopaedist Global Outreach**.

Seeing women lead in the operating room —
with confidence, precision, and authority —
made possibility real.

RJOS will elevate women as experts, innovators, and decision-makers

—
not on the margins,
but on the **main stage**.

Because when women are visible doing the work,
others can finally see themselves there too.

Pillar Three: Sponsorship — Not Just Mentorship

Mentorship is guidance.
Sponsorship is power.

A mentor advises you.
A sponsor advocates for you when you are not in the room.

This is not theoretical for me.

My joints lady pod sisters — what we call the **Estrogen Mafia** — are a living example of sponsorship in action.

We do not just encourage one another.
We nominate each other.
We recommend each other.
We make the calls.
We open the doors.

When one of us is ready for a podium, a leadership role, or a seat at the table —
we make sure her name is in the room.

That is sponsorship.

RJOS will move beyond good intentions to intentional advancement —
placing women into roles of influence where decisions are made and
futures are shaped.

Because women do not need more encouragement.

We need access.

We need advocacy.

We need doors opened — and held open.

Pillar Four: Ownership

Ownership is where power becomes permanent.

Not just participating —
but leading.

Not just contributing —
but building.

This pillar is about expanding pathways in academia, industry,
entrepreneurship, and policy —
so women are not only part of the system,
but architects of it.

Because true equity is not being invited in.

It is owning the building.

Pillar Refrain

**So let me be clear about what you can expect —
and what I will deliver.**

Agency.

Visibility.

Sponsorship.

Ownership.

Call to Action

Do not just belong to RJOS.
Build it.

Do not just attend meetings.
Lead initiatives.

Do not just mentor one woman.
Sponsor ten.

Because leadership is not about the title you hold.
It is about the doors you open.

History does not change by accident.

It changes when bold women decide it will.

Tonight — that is us.

Let's get to work.