

CONFERENCE LIBRARY

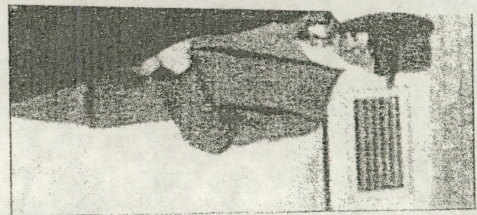
...was unfortunate that v  
...people regarded him as one who had given up the faith, when, in reality,  
...leadership had dismissed him for not yielding his plans to their authority. He  
...to the teaching of the church until his death. It was not his plan to leave the  
...movement and to organize a denomination of his own. However, when the lead-  
...dismissed him and his congregation from the organization, to establish a new  
...group seemed the natural thing for him to do.

Elder J. K. Humphrey subsequently lost his sight; however, before he passed  
away he revisited the church that he loved. In a very moving scene, this great  
leader was led down the aisle of the Ephesus Church with tears of remorse stream-  
ing down his face. His situation was similar to that of Dr. J. Harvey Kellogg, the  
champion for the rights of all people. Humphrey never abandoned the biblical  
values of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination that he had embraced and that  
he had taught to others.

In 1944, outraged by the death of a Colored member named Lucille Byard in  
Washington, D.C., because the segregated practices of the Seventh-day Adventist  
hospital would not admit her for medical treatment, the Black membership across  
the nation insisted that a total plan of integration be followed by the church.  
Instead of granting this request, separate Black Conferences were formed. The  
first one was the Lake Region Conference in Chicago; the second was Northeast-  
ern in New York.

The Northeastern Conference was organized in 1945. Today, this conference  
has built, and continues to operate, schools, nursing homes, senior citizens homes  
and community outreach programs, and it has the largest membership of all the  
conferences in the Atlantic Union. It contributes upwards of twenty million dol-  
lars in tithe annually. Without the income from this organization, the entire North  
American Division would show a loss in membership and its financial operating  
revenues from year to year.

J. K. Humphrey had a vision of what the church could be like if the leadership  
would bring itself to share leadership roles with African-Americans in a mean-  
ingful manner.



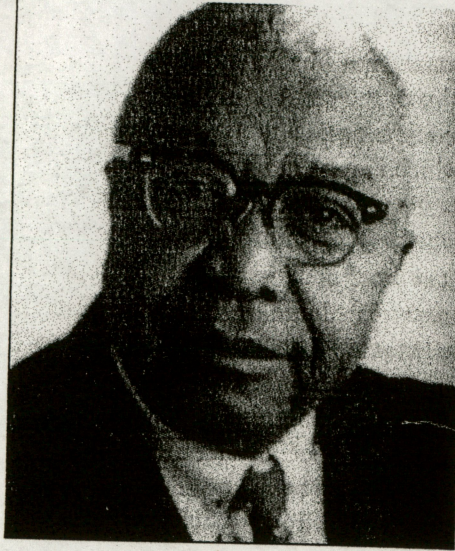
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congregations compelled the conferences to dismiss workers. Some left on their own. These Regional Conferences in

which I cannot be served, and now - this incident - I think it mighty strange!

"The strange event to which Montgomery referred was that Brother Byard, a long time member of the Linden Boulevard S.D.A. Church in Springfield Gardens, New York, a fair-skinned mulatto, had taken his wife, Lucy, to the denomination's Washington Sanitarium and Hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland, where she was to be admitted as a patient. When her true racial identity was secured in writing rather than by appearance, he was told a mistake had been made and his wife was wheeled into a hallway where she remained for hours. Calls were placed to various hospitals and Dr. J. Mark Cox, a native Washingtonian, Loma Linda graduate who was interning at Freedman's Hospital remembers with chagrin welcoming Sister Byard to Freedman's. She died shortly thereafter of pneumonia, whether contracted while waiting in the hallway of the sanitarium, as hasty rumor put it, eternity alone can tell. To quiet the Ephesus Church, upset by her removal from the sanitarium, Elder W. G. Turner, an Australian who was the president of the North American Division, came to attempt to pacify the members. He had been warned against this by Elder G. E. Peters (the director of the Negro Department of the General Conference). Turner's text that Sabbath morning was: 1 Peter 4:12, 'Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trials which is to try you.' He had hardly sat down when Montgomery placed his violin in the seat he occupied near the organ, faced the congregation and delivered his speech saying among other things, 'I am not prepared to hear you say, Servants, obey your masters, meaning the General Conference is our master.' His cup was full. Previous instances of segregation practices



James O. Montgomery



Dr. J. M. Cox

Regional Conferences in the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



Mrs. Lucille Byard

not to get by. After the worship was over a select group gathered around him to discuss the incident and what should be done about it. Ephesus in New York had long been known as the largest Negro church in the denomination, but Ephesus in Washington, D.C., had the high marks for being the sophisticated one; it was proven to be by the composition of the committee formed by this group.

These were the kingpins, the decision makers, the shakers, the power brokers, the movers among the people:

"JOSEPH T. DODSON, chairman, operated his own funeral limousine service and at one time had been approved by

the Union Conference committee to be the pastor of the church for one year. ALMA JAMES SCOTT, vice chairperson, was the founder of the first social security settlement house among Negroes in the entire world.

"WILLIE DODSON'S wife was working toward her Ph.D. in psychology and served as the principal of a Washington, D.C., Junior High School. MRS. L. B. D. COX, mother of Dr. J. Mark Cox, was a critic teacher in the public school but resigned the post the next day so as not to jeopardize her son, Mark, who was planning a denominational career. HELEN SUGLAND grew up under the pastorate of Louis C. Sheafe who sought Black conferences in the earlier teens of the twentieth century. She was a public school teacher par excellence.



Lucille Byard with her husband and family

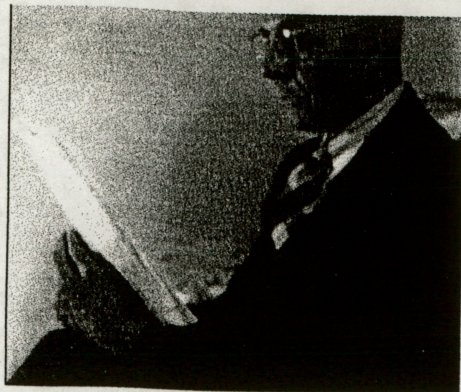


congregations compelled the conferences to dismiss workers. Some tell on ninan-  
Regional Conferences in

n.D. degree (Head of the English department at Howard University). And then there was VALERIS JUSTISS, corresponding secretary, who would soon be the second Seventh-day Adventist woman in the world to receive the n.D. degree. ALAN A. ANDERSON as just beginning his career as systems engineer which led him to Division Chief in the U.S. government. He had been the victim of being terminated from the ministry by the 'system' back in Indiana.

"There was BROTHER DANIELS who represented the laity of the First D.A. Church in Washington, D.C., and served as the recording secretary. After LAERTES GILLIS appointed him as treasurer.—*Angels in Ebony*, p. 43-45.

They chose the name "The Committee For The Advancement of Worldwide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists," with its objective being to give complete integration within the denomination. This committee, with leader John H. Wagner, Sr., as the spirit-advisor, moved to contact other Black kingpins in other congregations across the country and share details of the problem with them. The response was remarkable. J. G. Dasent in New Orleans; Arna Bontemps in Nashville, Tennessee; O. A. Troy, Sr., in Pasadena, California, and L. H. Bland in Baltimore, Maryland, were contacted. Each responded positively. Out of a meeting later held in Chicago, Illinois, came an agreement from J. L. McElhany, president of the General Conference, to meet with these kingpins to discuss the position of the denomination related to leadership roles for Blacks in the church.

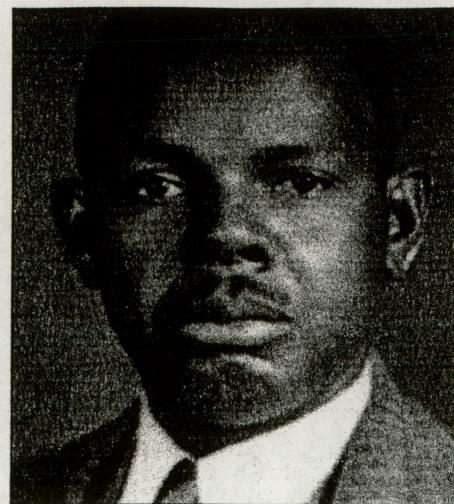


John Byard



Dr. Eva B. Dykes

Regional Conferences in the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists



Joseph T. Dodson

## STRUCTURE

On Sunday, October 17, 1943, at the General Conference Committee's fall meeting at the Stevens Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, the group presented an agenda to the president and requested that it be passed onward to the White policymakers of the church body. Below is a copy of the document that was presented:

## SHALL THE FOUR FREEDOMS FUNCTION AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS?

"Those who slight a brother because of his color are slighting Jesus." - *Southern Work*, p. 9.

- I. Result of neglect of the colored people - the curse of sin on the church. - *Southern Work*, p. 12.
- II. Estimate of the colored people as being
  - A. Brethren - *Southern Work*, p. 4
  - B. Capable of attaining eternal life as the White man. - *Ibid*, p. 27
  - C. Travelers to the same heaven to sit down at the same table as the Whites. - *Ibid*, p. 10
  - D. Worshippers of the same God as the Whites. - *Ibid*, p. 6
- III. Capabilities of the colored people talent, 9:202; ability, 9:202; quick perception and bright minds, 7T:229; reasoning power - *Southern Work*, p. 12, 27
- IV. Duty of the White Adventists:
  - A. to repair as far as in their power past injury done to the Colored people, 7T:230,
  - B. to show "exact and impartial" justice to the Negro race
  - C. to increase the force of colored workers, 9T:207;
  - D. to throw their influence against the customs and practices of the world. - *Southern Work*
- V. Solution; the love of Jesus a "dissipater" of heredity and cultivated prejudices. - *Ibid*



congregations compelled the conferences to dismiss workers. Some ten or more financial hard times. Fifty-five years have passed and these Regional Conferences in the North American Division are stronger than ever in evangelistic outreach, in membership growth, in the establishment of innovative programs, and in finances. Things will never be the same.

The kingpins settled down to get on with the commission of preaching the gospel. After the meetings with the church leaders, the church began establishing institutions for Blacks, and Oakwood Junior College was elevated to senior college status; its student enrollment in 1996-97 stood at over 1,700. It is the second largest Seventh-day Adventist college in the world. During the 1945 meetings money was allocated to build a new hospital facility at Riverside Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee; however when the hospital was turned over to the Southern Union Conference to operate, it was closed, as were all other predominately Black operated medical institutions in America. Strong support was given for the continued publication of the *Message Magazine*. The Pine Forge Academy was established in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, in 1947. On the West Coast all things continued as they were from the beginning. Leaders and laity on the West Coast are requesting that Regional Conferences be established there.

With the establishment of Regional Conferences in 1944 (one hundred years after the Advent Movement had its beginning in America), there were fear and apprehensions at first, but the Lord led the leaders in the advancement of the work. Today there are still few opportunities for Blacks to exercise their God-given leadership strengths at all levels of the White-controlled system of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination to help with administering the finishing of the work in all the earth that the kingdom might come. Regional unions should probably be the next step in order for Blacks to have meaningful leadership roles in the church.

The use of the Black kingpin concept has turned out to be a blessing for the onward progress of the work in the Black sector of the Seventh-day Adventist church.

### **WHO WAS MRS. LUCILLE BYARD'S WHOSE TREATMENT CHANGED THE COURSE OF AFRICAN SDA HISTORY?**

Memories of My Grandmother: LUCILLE BYARD OF NEW YORK CITY  
(by Naomi R. Allen, granddaughter)

"I don't remember the exact age I was when I first saw my grandmother, but I was just recently born at the time (more than fifty years ago). My memories of her are very special. I called her 'Nana' instead of grandma. Her husband, I referred to as Daddy Byard. She was quite a lady, an excellent musician and my first piano teacher. My reflections of her will span just a brief time during my lifetime because she passed away when I was eight years of age. I had no idea that her passing would greatly influence the establishment of what we now call the

Regional Conferences in the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

"During her lifetime, she was a tower of strength to the music programs of Seventh-day Adventist denomination and other church groups in New York City. Some of my fondest memories are when she would play the piano and organ at the services. She also was the director of the choir at the Jamaica, Long Island congregation. When I was five years of age, she would oftentimes place my small fingers on the piano, first on middle 'C,' then descending and ascending for an octave. This was my first piano lesson. She encouraged my heart by telling me that I was a very good music student and I am grateful for her words of encouragement for I did continue to play the instruments.

"Nana was a singer (not a soloist), but a very accomplished choir director. This may also account for the stir that rocked the denomination when she passed away. Daddy Byard was often referred to as the 'old, young man' who played the harmonica and swayed the audiences with his music. One of his favorite hymns was 'In the Land Where We'll Never Grow Old!'

"It is hard for me to conceive of his being 70 years old during that time! He had so much energy! He wanted to live to be 100 years of age; however, he did not reach the ripe old age of 99 years before the Lord took him.

"Through the years of their lives, Nana and Daddy Byard had a loving relationship and displayed it before the family and friends. Never do I recall any loud disagreements, even though they had differences of opinions. One of her favorite pastimes was the cooking of a tasty meal. They lived on vegetarian diets and led the family into this healthful way of life. The smell of hot rolls, loaves of bread, homemade gluten, pies, cakes, nut loaves filled the air with breathtaking aroma and the food not only looked appetizing but tasted good. I don't recall having any problems with cleaning my plate at Nana's house during the mealtime.

"My grandparents loved the Sabbath and always encouraged me to keep it as being the Lord's day of worship even during my young age. Most of my early years (4-8) I would spend at least half of the time between their house and my parents'.

"My love for people came from Nana and my mother. I was accustomed to seeing such guests as Elder F. L. Peterson, L. B. Reynolds, R. W. Nelson, S. Armstrong, T. M. Rowe, W. W. Fordham, U. S. Willis and others often coming to the house for Sabbath dinner. These and many others were always welcomed in my grandparents' and parents' homes. My grandparents took me to many places throughout the State of New York where these leaders of the church were holding meetings.

"It never dawned upon me that Nana would ever be taken from us in death. My feelings, were as those of most children, that our grandparents and parents would live forever. Death to a child seems so foreign. It was like 'make believe.' To understand that someone you love is gone forever is very hard to understand or to accept. I do not recall exactly when Nana became ill, but it was not a long



is concern in some quarters about Adolf Hitler's militarization of Germany. World War II ensued, and the issue of the Seventh-day Adventist soldier in the military would be addressed. Many became non-combatant servants in the military of the Allied and the Axis forces. The Seventh-day Adventist denomination, like the Catholic church, was a worldwide movement that spanned the globe, and members served on both sides of the conflict.

When the war ended in 1945, the denomination was faced with the task of planting churches and providing places of worship, as well as hospitals, publishing houses and school facilities. In addition, thousands of Adventists became refugees and the church reached out to help them find new homelands. But there was also growing unrest among the Black membership in the North American Division that had to be addressed. People from other lands, some who had been enemies of America, were being received with outstretched arms and heartfelt welcome; but African-Americans were still being rejected and segregated within the denominational circle.

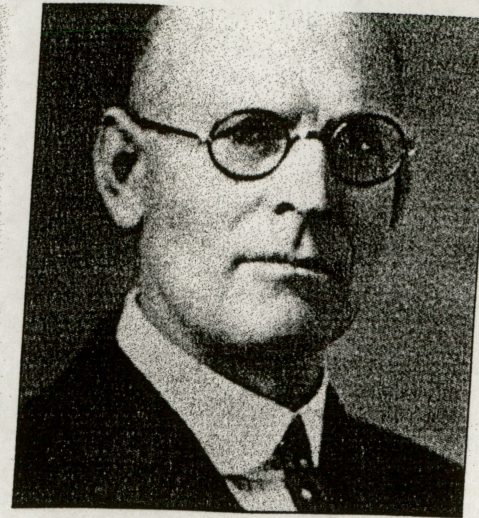


A. V. Pinkney

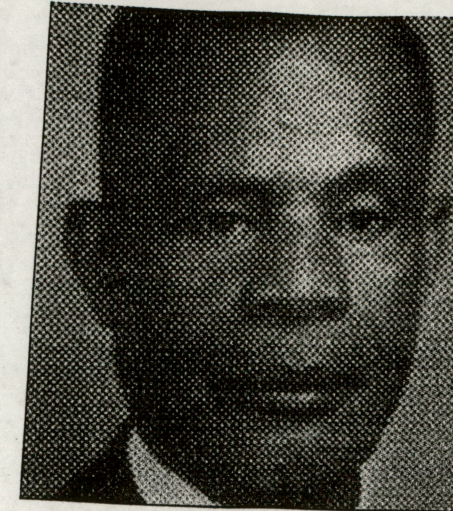
The need for reorganization in the church in North America was apparent in many areas, and much of the president's final term was occupied trying to resolve these issues. The organization of separate Regional Conferences for Black Adventists in the United States was the result, and these conferences became the fastest growing organizations that the church has witnessed in its history of over 100 years. The world membership was approximately 630,732, of which more than half were in the North American Division; 19,700 of these were African-Americans.

**THE S.D.A. SPRING COUNCIL OF 1944**

When the Spring Council of the Seventh-day Adventist General Conference met in Chicago, Illinois, in 1944, the Lucille Byard incident was fresh on the hearts of Black constituents. Laity and pastors gathered from New York to California to lay before the church fathers, their concerns and anxieties over the segregated practices against African-Americans that existed among members of the



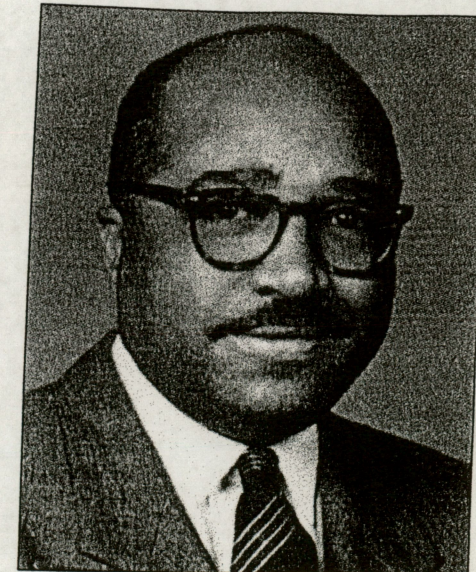
Jay J. Nethery



J. G. Dasent



L. H. Bland



J. H. Wagner, Sr.

Seventh-day Adventist denomination in the United States. They urged that all church-operated institutions be integrated immediately.

Two representatives of the newly organized Committee for the Advancement of Worldwide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists, Joseph T. Dodson