

Part I: Precedent

Chronology

- 1886** Adventist city mission opens in Washington, D.C.
- 1887** Dr. James H. Howard and wife Isabella, socially prominent Black Washingtonians, embrace Adventism.
- 1889** *February*: Washington, D.C., church organized; biracial membership of 26.
October: Nashville camp meeting – races segregated; Charles Kinney becomes first Black Adventist ordained, proposes eventual “colored conferences” and urges that Christian principles be “zealously inculcated” to eliminate racial prejudice in the church.
November: Dr. James H. Howard protests segregation at Nashville in letter to GC president O.A. Olsen.
- 1891** “Our Duty to the Colored People” – Ellen White rebukes church leaders for not seeking to reach Black people in the South and calls for racial equality in church fellowship.
- 1895** Edson White initiates steamboat-based mission to reach Black people in the Deep South, leading to organization of the Southern Missionary Society.
- 1896** *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court ruling opens door to regime of legal segregation and white supremacy in the South and the nadir of race relations nationwide.

- 1899** Black membership in Washington church estimated at 50 out of 150; A.F. Ballenger calls the interracial church “a living miracle.”
- 1901** L. C. Sheafe proposal for departmental organization of the Black work set aside.
- 1902** *June-September:* Sheafe evangelism gains press attention, draws both races, leads to 75 new Adventists.
September: Washington church divided by conference authorities; approximately 40 form new white congregation (Memorial church) while nearly as many whites remain with Black believers in First church.
- 1903** *March-June:* denomination-wide campaign raises \$10,000 for white (Memorial) church only.
July: General Conference and Review and Herald move to Takoma Park, D.C.-Maryland border.
December: Sheafe organizes People’s church, Adventism’s first major predominantly Black urban congregation.
- 1905** \$150,000 campaign culminated to fund new GC/Review and Herald facilities and launch of new college and sanitarium in Takoma Park.
June: People’s church acquires new building with no financial support from GC; membership approaches 150.
- 1906** People’s church petition and GC response confirms racial exclusion at Takoma Park institutions; no path to equal access for Black Adventists to education, employment, and health care at church institutions.
- 1907** African American Adventist membership estimated at 750 in the South, 1300 nationwide.
January-March: People’s church declares independence; GC revokes Sheafe’s ministerial credentials.
March: support at First church for joining People’s church in break from denomination opposed by Dr. Howard.
- 1908** *October:* E.G. White testimony brings unity but leaves a

contested legacy.

Sydney Scott advocates Black conference plan.

- 1909** Black ministers' appeal urges church leadership to address racial disparities.
North American Negro Department organized, headed by white minister.
- 1913** Sheafe and People's church reconnect with denomination.
- 1916** *April:* Sheafe (now based in Los Angeles) and J.W. Manns in Savannah, Georgia, join to form Free Seventh Day Adventist denomination.
July-Sept: People's church again asserts financial independence from denomination, but a minority protests.
October: NAD votes funding for church buildings to house Black congregations.
November: Women lead secession of denominational loyalists from People's church in forming Ephesus church in Washington, D.C.
- 1917** Church building acquired to house Ephesus church in D.C. with major support from GC.
- 1918** African American Adventist membership estimate: 3,500.
W.H. Green becomes first Black minister to head the North American Negro Department.
- 1919** Amidst rash of anti-Black urban violence, large-scale migration out of the South, and other upheavals, Black Adventists evangelize and bring total estimated membership to 4,750.

Part II: Protest

Chronology

- 1921 “Negro Mission” plan for union conferences in the South abandoned with adoption of improved representation plan, but Black conference proposal fails.
- 1922 J.K. Humphrey of New York pledges never to abandon organized work in GC sermon.
- 1929 Humphrey breaks with denomination and heads rival United Sabbath Day Adventists.
GC supports plan for Black “boarding school of academic grade” in the North.
- 1930 GC rejects Black conference plan and forbids further discussion of the idea.
Negro union secretary/committee plan adopted.
- 1931 *October*: Oakwood student strike.
- 1934 *May*: Youth’s Congress at Oakwood attended by 1,000 delegates.
November: Dr. J.H. Howard admitted to Washington Sanitarium for cancer surgery; recovers.
- 1935 *August*: Washington Sanitarium board vote to restrict service to colored patients 1) to SDAs, 2) only when “absolutely necessary,” and provide it 3) only in the basement.

- 1936 *January*: After relapse, Dr. Howard dies at Washington Sanitarium but only after being sent home for nursing care that could not be adequately provided in that setting.
- 1939 SDA college presidents' agreement that Black students begin at Oakwood and come to senior colleges only to complete four-year degrees along with concurrent increase of segregation on campus of Emmanuel Missionary College reported in Black newspapers.
- 1941 National Association for the Advancement of Adventist Youth organized.
- 1942 Restricted access to nurses' training for Black SDAs worsens to crisis point, despite years of discussion and proposals.
- 1943 *September 22*: Lucy Byard denied admittance for pre-arranged treatment at Washington Sanitarium.
October 3: G.E. Peters warns GC officers that the Byard incident had "aroused considerable feeling" among Black Adventists.
October 16: GC VP Turner's sermon at Ephesus church enflames rather than calms feelings.
October 16: Ephesus and First church members form Committee for the Advancement of World-wide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists.
October 17: Committee members meet with General Conference president J.L. McElhany; outline call to action.
October 30: Lucy Byard dies at Freedmen's Hospital in Washington, D.C.
November 3: GC Annual Council votes special pre-Spring Council meeting 1944 in Chicago to "study the future development of our colored work."
- 1944 *February 18*: Committee letter seeks to hold President McElhany accountable.
March 8: McElhany uses candid letter by Dr. Stark O. Cherry to apprise union presidents of Black lay perspective on church racial conditions.

Part III: Praxis

Chronology

1944 *April 8*: Joseph Dodson and Addison Pinkney distribute “Four Freedoms” pamphlet to delegates at Chicago meeting but are refused permission to remain.

April 10: Spring Council approves organization of conferences to be “administered by colored officers and committees.”

Spring Council recommends: 1) establishment of a school in the North to provide advanced training for Black SDA youth; 2) appointment of a Black editor of *Message* magazine; 3) publication of a periodical for Black constituency similar to union papers; 4) establishment of a commission on meeting “the medical and nursing education needs of our colored constituency in the North.”

Committee disbands at McElhany’s request.

June: Columbia Union plan includes only the eastern portion of the union’s territory in new Black conference.

September: Lake Region, first Black conference, organized.

October: Northeastern Conference organized.

October: Ohio Laity movement and Black ministers protest exclusion of their part of the union territory from Black conference organization.

November: Word that the Columbia Union was backing away from Black conference organization entirely sparks new

round of lay protest and GC pressure to stay the course.

December: Allegheny Conference organized, covering entire Columbia Union territory.

- 1945 *December:* South Atlantic and South Central Conferences organized.
- 1946 Allegheny Conference establishes long-delayed “school in the North”–Pine Forge Institute.
- 1947 First Black conference camp meeting draws 3,000 to Pine Forge.
- 1958 Warren Banfield’s high profile leadership of Tampa, Florida, NAACP chapter protected from reprisal by South Atlantic Conference president John H. Wagner.
- 1968 South Central Conference medical van accompanies MLK-organized Poor People’s Campaign to Washington, D.C., and “Resurrection City” after King’s assassination.