

ED KING COLLECTION - Box 1, FOLDER 17  
Mississippi Council On Human Relations  
MCHR 54-58

Card - Mrs. R. S. Lyells, Executive Director MCHR

- God Versus Segregation - 2 copies - 55/54
- Letter to: MCHR; From: Mrs. R. S. Lyells - 10/23/56
- MCHR 1957 Program for Action - 12/56
- Miss CHR Jots, Vol. III, No. 5 - 12/56
- Intergroup Education (2 copies)
- What Could Not This Child Become?
- Mississippi CHR Jots, Vol. II, No. 4 - 8/56
- Mississippi CHR Jots, Vol. I, No. 3 - 9/55
- Mississippi CHR Jots, Vol. II, No. II - 1/56
- Letter to Ed King; From: R. S. Lyells - 1/4/56
- Letter to Ed King; From: R. S. Lyells - 2/23/56
- MCHR Jots, Vol. II, No. 3 - 3/56
- Letter to Member of MCHR; From: R. S. Lyells - 10/23/56
- MCHR By-Laws (2 copies) - 12/56
- New South - 3/56
- Let's Work Together Bulletin, No. 1 - 5/56
- Let's Work Together Bulletin - 11/5/55
- MCHR Song Sheet - 55/56
- Memo to: Friend of MCHR; From: Ruby S. Lyells -55?
- MCHR Pledge Card

I was born in the South and I know segregation for all its scorning hate and sin. I was a child of poor parents who used their day of rest going to Sunday School and church services to thank God for what He had given them. I never heard my parents discuss segregation - to them it didn't seem to have any meaning one way or the other, for they adopted the habit of thinking that some white people just didn't like them and they were friendly with the ones who did.

Our neighbors, white and colored alike, were poor and among the children there was no segregation. We played together until we were segregated, and when that happened, all the children were hurt and sometimes the hurt was so deep that it never healed. Children who believe in segregation are taught segregation, and to teach them you must plant a seed of hate in their little hearts. This is dangerous, because that seed will produce roots and branches - roots that grow so deep and branches that reach out so far that seeds of love and kindness and humbleness and understanding - our inheritance from God - cannot grow.

And now, as a mother, I know why my parents never discussed segregation. They had no words to tell their children; no words that would take away the hurt, and the scorning sting they had to endure from it. But I knew that I would have to discuss segregation because my children would ask it of me. I had to have something to tell them. Words? Yes, it would have to be words, but words that would win a victory over segregation, words so great that segregation would be spoken of with shame.

I knew that there was only one place to find these words - in the Bible, where God's words were found. And so I prayed and read, chapter after chapter, verse after verse, seeking the words of God, fearful of the day when my children would be hit with the full meaning of the word segregation, when they would begin to choose their own friends, and to meet all the things that come between good men and women and the things they want to do.

My prayers and my reading gave me faith; a faith greater than I had ever known, a faith that taught me patience and love, so deep in my heart that every mother's child is a son or daughter to me. I found that, like God, death, disease, and worry are not respectors of persons, for I have seen tears with white mothers who lost their children in war and I have helped them pray for their sick. And yet I could not find the words I wanted so much.

I have watched kindness and disregard for race or color in times of disaster when I have seen God's love shine in the eyes of one human being for another. And I have asked myself, "Must that love shine only when there is disaster, can it not be with us always?"

And I have answered, with the many others who may have asked themselves that same question, "Yes, when we live together in that Heaven that God has prepared for us." And yet I always had the hope that God would bring us together here on earth and that segregation would be abolished, and with this hope burning deep within me I watched my children and their playmates closely and told them the things God wanted them to know.

.....  
 This inspiring story was written by Mrs. William Cottles, Sr. of New Orleans, Louisiana, who sent it to the Southern Regional Council and who has given us permission to make copies available for you.

1EK79.01

So the time passed, too full to drag or to be dull, and as days went on, that day I knew would come was upon me. It came with the showing of a movie, one of the children's favorite fairy tales. The picture was being shown at a downtown theater where the colored sat upstairs and the white downstairs.

The picture was the topic of the neighborhood. Every child wanted to see it and it was all they talked about for a whole week. I tried to suggest that they wait until the picture came to a neighborhood movie but they drowned my voice so that I couldn't tell them anything. They just had to see it now! So, on that beautiful afternoon the children all went - some with their parents, some in groups. My children went with their close friends.

My home is a straight-back house with one room going into the other and there was a long alley which needed cleaning. This kept me busy for the greater part of the time they were gone. I tried to make every minute count, and was so intense in my work that I didn't realize how late it was until I heard the children coming up the alley. I stopped still, for the usual noisy chatter was missing. I stood in the door of the house, waiting.

I heard one of them say, "Aw man, what d'you care, we seen the picture; didn't we?"

I heard no answer and when they entered the house the look on their faces told me why there was no noise. Something was wrong. I didn't move, waiting until they walked up to me. From the look on their faces I knew they were puzzled but I knew also that they were hurt. I tried to think what could have robbed them of that happy, God-given, carefree look with which they had left but now had lost.

It was one of my sons who broke through my wondering thoughts by asking, "Mama, why are we treated so bad?"

I found my voice to say, "In what way, son?"

"All ways, Mama," he replied, giving way to his pent-up emotions, "First on the street car, we had to sit in the back of a piece of wood. You see, we didn't know, Mama, and we sat any place and the motorman hollered at us."

He stopped. Now I was shocked. I felt every pain of the humiliation he must have felt and I couldn't say a word.

One little fellow said, "Oh, we could have beat up that motorman. He was a little old man."

Paying no attention to his friend, my son continued, "Then, when we got to the show we couldn't sit downstairs; we had to climb a lot of steps and the picture was so small it looked like it was a mile away. Why, Mama, does God let people do things like that?"

I looked at him and I knew that this was not simply a child's question. It would be asked by my children until they were eighty-three years old or until segregation ceases to exist. I had to find the words now and they had to be the right ones.

As I stood there the words came, those words that I had searched for for years, only to remember that they were planted into my heart at the age of eight. And though it seemed that I prayed for hours, it all came to me in a minute.

Seating myself, I called the children to me and said,

"Children, you wanted to see a fairy story in the movies, so you won't mind if I tell you one, one I learned as a little girl."

"Do you," I asked, and they nodded their heads in assent.

"You see, I continued, "I know just how you feel, for once upon a time I was a little girl of eight and I was hurt as you were today, only it wasn't a piece of wood in a streetcar or climbing stairs in a theater. It was a playground - a playground I watched men build with a happy heart and never did I think that I wouldn't be allowed to play in it. Oh, I heard my Papa and Mama say something about a "white" park, but it didn't mean anything to me. Because, like you children, in our neighborhood all the children played together. When that playground was finished it was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. It had beautiful green grass, cut close to the ground, that felt like cotton under my bare feet, and swings, hanging on newly painted posts, and see-saws. I had never seen anything like it. The see-saw we had before was a wide plank across a tree stump and these new ones and the sliding boards were things that my child's heart longed to enjoy.

"One day I stood outside, looking in, denied the opportunity to use the park. And as I looked with longing, I gazed upward and, blowing in all its glory was my flag, our flag, the one I had been taught to love, that stood for my country, my America. The tears, salty as brine, streamed down my cheeks, and I sucked in my bottom lip and the salt taste made my whole trembling mouth wince and I wondered why I was ever born or the world was ever made.

"Something made me look higher and above the flag my eyes fell on a large, white cloud, that looked like the side of a house, with small patches of blue that were like small windowpanes in a large window.

"Then I remembered the story I had been told. And like the child in that story, in my imagination I saw the hands of God. In one hand He held a box full of paint - all colors, and in the other He held a brush. And on an easel, tilted back, lay three babies. One of them He had not painted at all, the second He had painted brown, and the third a lighter brown.

"With the brown paint left on His brush, He painted the eyes of all the babies. Then, dipping the brush in black paint, He painted the hair, eye-brows and lashes of all the babies. And with what was left on the brush He put a black dot in the center of each baby's eyes.

"When He had finished, I saw Him gently place each baby in a three-cornered piece of cloth and hook them on the bills of storks that stood waiting to do God's delivering. My heart gave a thump of gladness for I knew that God had colored all of us with the same colors. God Almighty had placed the colors where He wanted them and no one could hate my color and not want to touch it, for they had the same dark color closer to them than I could ever get.

"I also knew that others were no better than I, for their was no white, black, brown, or yellow people, when all were colored by the hand of God.

"My heart was filled with gladness, and as I raised my hand to touch my wet cheek I realized that there were no more salt tears and my lips broadened into a big smile for I knew that God loved me.

"I was just about to turn and go home when the policeman who watched the playground (and the same one who had told us to keep out) touched me on the shoulder saying,

"Little girl, don't cry, because I am going to walk to the other side of the playground and you can swing and slide as much as you want to and I am going to stay there until you are finished.

"I looked up at the big policeman and gave him a bigger smile. And looking up at my big, white cloud with its big open window, I clasped my hands together as I was taught to do when saying my prayers and said, 'Thank you, God' to let Him know that I understood. Then I turned to the big, kind policeman, who loved me also, and said,

"No thank you. We have a big swing on a big acorn tree in our yard and a good slide down the hill at the corner.'

Then I saw tears well up in his eyes and I knew in my child's heart that I was the one who was happy. I felt sorry for the policeman because he wanted to be good and see God at work and he could not.

"I three a kiss at Old Glory, my flag, saying, 'You are wonderful', and I left the policeman, scratching his head and looking from me to the flag.

"And, I concluded, "Never since has the sign "White Only" hurt me because I know it is only an insult to God, the first and greatest creator of art and the only artist who gave his creation life. Children, when you are men and women and stop to admire the colors in the rainbow across the heavens, or to look at a beautiful sunset, or to admire flowers in all their radiant colors, or when you see the trees stretching forth their beautiful branches in thanks, remember that God in His heaven is admiring your color, too."

"You see, children, colors are beautiful and they form a picture of everything God has made."

One little fellow who was nicknamed Turk, stepped out from among the others and with his large, brown eyes shining happily, said slowly,

"An' they tan' tall me black, huh?" I knelt down beside him hugging him closely, and thanking God, for I knew that they understood.

And as I looked at the others I saw the same happy look on their faces and I heard one of my own children say,

"And Mama, if all the people saw God at work like we did, they would be God's people and everybody would be happy."

And smiling, I replied, "Yes son, if they truly believed in God, for only a believing soul can see God's works and I want you to know that there are plenty of believing souls in America."

America is a nation of people serving God, each in his own fashion. And having one God among them, the American people are the real judges in this case of God Versus Segregation, and for true Americans with the Godly spirit, there is but one decision.