

## Book Review

Dummet CO, Dummett LD. *NDA II: The Story of America's Second National Dental Association*. Washington, DC: National Dental Association Foundation, 2000. 353 pp. Ill. Hardback. (\$69.95 + shipping and handling.)

Commissioned by the National Dental Association (NDA), "The Story of America's Second National Dental Association" traces the origin, struggles, triumphs, growth, and development of organized dentistry among African American dentists. This volume is more than a mere chronicle of the history of this organization; out of necessity, it also tells American black history from a dental perspective.

Most members of the dental profession in the United States know that the National Dental Association is a dental association made up primarily of African American dentists, but few know that the title of the organization once belonged to a different group of dentists.

The American Dental Association was formally established in 1859. However, when this country was divided by the Civil War, organized dentistry also was affected. As a result, while the American Dental Association was maintained, a smaller organization, the Southern Dental Association, was founded in 1869. These two organizations reflected many of the social and philosophical differences that emanated from the Civil War. Many years later, in an attempt to reconcile differences, the two organizations merged into the National Dental Association in 1897. This name was maintained until 1922, when the organization opted to return to its original name, the American Dental Association. The purpose of this latter

change was for the organization to be able to identify itself as being representative of American dentistry. Generally, however, black dentists were not encouraged to be members of this organization; in the South, they were not allowed to be members at all.

In contrast, the National Medical Association (NMA), created in 1895, offered professional refuge for African American physicians, dentists, and pharmacists. In fact, several African American dentists held the highest elected positions in the NMA. Still, the NMA was not quite what African American dentists wanted as a professional organization to represent them. Although many state and local societies for black dentists emerged over the years, it wasn't until 1913 that a single organization for African American dentists emerged. Originally named the Interstate Dental Association, in 1932 the name was changed to the National Dental Association, which mirrored the name of the National Medical Association.

The first six chapters of this volume trace the evolution of African Americans' interest in dentistry and ultimately their collective realization of the need for an organization to represent them. The story of the NDA's establishment and evolution is inextricably linked with America's history. This book is an interesting review and perspective of the history of this country and its ability or lack of such to provide equal opportunity for all Americans.

Subsequent chapters, sometimes in almost too much detail, provide the names of the leadership, agendas of the annual scientific sessions, and names of speakers for all of the NDA annual sessions since its inception.

Several events, which should be of particular interest to those in dental public health and those concerned with social equities, include the exciting times of the equal opportunity programs that had their heyday in the 1960s and 1970s. For example, the NDA produced a film, "Dentistry as a Career," designed to entice African Americans into the profession. Another very bright spot in the book is just how much the manufacturers of dental products have supported the African American dental profession, both in direct support of the NDA as well as by financing scholarships for black dental students. Despite these efforts, it is a sad commentary that so few African Americans have been recruited into dentistry and especially into dental public health.

This book is laced with five excellent photo galleries, which include many dental leaders and public health dentists known to the readers of the *JPHD*.

Inasmuch as all book reviews must have some criticism, for this reviewer the one detail omitted is an American black history timeline linked with dental history. The lead author, Distinguished Emeritus Professor Clifton O. Dummett, and his wife, Lois Doyle Dummett, have once again produced a thought-provoking and important documentation of African Americans, in this case of the establishment and contributions of the National Dental Association. No other team could have done it better, especially since Dr. Dummett was the editor of the *Journal of the National Dental Association* for 22 years and Mrs. Dummett was the assistant editor.—Alice M. Horowitz, PhD, 6307 Herkos Court, Bethesda, MD 20817.