

Biography

Born of West Indian immigrant parents — his mother was from Jamaica, his father from St. Vincent — Alexander grew up in an Ontario in which people of African descent could occasionally leap the barriers set by discrimination. When he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) in 1942 for example, that branch of the armed forces often restricted non-whites from entering service. Alexander served as a corporal in the RCAF until 1945. After the Second World War he turned to higher education.

Alexander earned a BA from McMaster University in 1949, followed by a degree from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1953. Alexander practiced law and was eventually appointed as Queen's Counsel in 1965. That year, he entered politics, running as Conservative MP for Hamilton West, but was defeated. Three years later, on 25 June 1968, he won the seat, making him the first Black Canadian to sit in the House of Commons. He was re-elected four times, serving a total of 12 years. In 1979, he was appointed minister of labour in the Clark government, a portfolio he held until 1980. That year, he resigned his seat in the House after he was appointed chairman of the Ontario Workers' Compensation Board, where he worked for the five years.

On 20 September 1985, Lincoln Alexander was sworn in as Ontario's 24th lieutenant-governor, the first Black Canadian to be appointed to a viceregal position in Canada. As lieutenant-governor, Alexander was able to take an active role in the multicultural affairs of Ontario. In 1991, when his term of office was up, Alexander accepted a post as chancellor of the University of Guelph where he served an unprecedented five terms.

Lincoln Alexander was known for his sound judgement, compassion and humanity. He was appointed as a Companion of the Order of Canada and to the Order of Ontario in 1992. On 28 November 2013, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario declared 21 January of each year Lincoln Alexander Day, citing Alexander's life as "an example of service, determination and humility. Always fighting for equal rights for all races in our society, and doing so without malice, he changed attitudes and contributed greatly to

the inclusiveness and tolerance of Canada today." On 21 January 2015, the event was observed for the first time across the country.

Source: "Lincoln Alexander," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lincoln-maccauley-alexander/>