

## JOHN H. JOHNSON



In 2012, the Postal Service is pleased to honor John H. Johnson, the trailblazing publisher of *Ebony*, *Jet*, and other magazines. Johnson overcame poverty and racism to build a business empire embracing magazines, radio stations, cosmetics, and more. His magazines portrayed black people positively at a time when such representation was rare, and played an important role in the civil rights movement.

His unwillingness to accept defeat was a key to Johnson's success. When he was unable to buy a lot in downtown Chicago because of his skin color, he hired a white lawyer who bought the land in trust. Thus, Johnson became the first black person to build a major building in Chicago's Loop, where Johnson Publishing still has its headquarters.

As Johnson's influence, accomplishments, and fortune grew, he received many prizes and honors. He joined Vice President Richard Nixon on a goodwill tour of Africa and served as a Special United States Ambassador for Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) awarded him its prestigious Spingarn Medal in 1966. Six years later, in 1972, his industry peers named him publisher of the year — a prize Johnson compared to winning an Oscar. In presenting Johnson with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1996, President Bill Clinton lauded him for giving hope to African Americans during difficult times. A panel of experts polled by Baylor University in 2003 named Johnson "the greatest minority entrepreneur in American history." That same year, Howard University named its journalism school after him.

The stamp, designed by USPS art director Howard Paine, features a color photograph of John H. Johnson taken by Bachrach Studios in Chicago. The photographer was David McCann.

The U.S. Postal Service has recognized the achievements of prominent African Americans through the Black Heritage series since 1978. This stamp honoring Johnson is the 35th stamp in that series, which highlights outstanding individuals who helped shape American culture.