

Whirlwind Johnson
Foundation



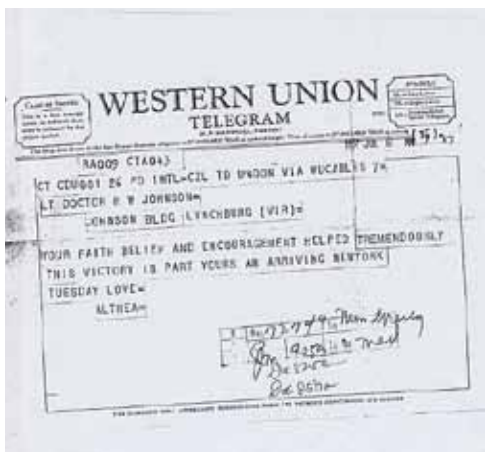
Celebrating the Tennis Legacy of
Dr. Robert Walter "Whirlwind" Johnson



Arthur Ashe



Althea Gibson





Whirlwind Johnson Foundation

Our mission is to restore and preserve the home, tennis court, garden, and legacy of Dr. Robert Walter

“Whirlwind” Johnson for generations to come.

“Dr. J,” as his players called him, would become a driving force not only in integrating the sport of tennis, but also in producing some of the game’s most recognized champions. From a small house in Lynchburg, VA, Dr. J and his players made an impact across the globe.

“Needless to say, our sport, our country, indeed the world community, became a better place because of Althea and Arthur’s achievements. Dr. Johnson made it possible for them to succeed. His extraordinary role should be remembered, appreciated and applauded, not just by African Americans, but also by everyone who strives for equality and justice.”

John McEnroe, from the foreword of the book
“Whirlwind: The Godfather of Black Tennis”

“Dr. Johnson was a major force in the careers of Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe, through his guidance, training and generosity. He also helped many other players on the tour through his wisdom and generous ways.”

Billie Jean King, Tennis Great
and 12-time Grand Slam Winner

“Without Whirlwind, neither Althea Gibson nor Arthur Ashe would have become the first African-Americans to win major tennis titles. Both acknowledged the significance of his role in their development several times during their storied lives.”

Alan G. Schwartz
Former USTA Chairman of the Board and President

About Dr. Robert W. Johnson

Dr. Robert Walter “Whirlwind” Johnson was the force behind integrating tennis. As his nickname “Whirlwind” suggests, he stormed across the American tennis landscape for three decades (1940-1970) and changed tennis forever. The former football All-American built a tennis dynasty in Lynchburg, VA, that produced the first two African-American grand slam champions, Althea Gibson and Arthur Ashe.



On August 24, 1946, Dr. Johnson and his good friend, Dr. Hubert Eaton, discovered the future of world tennis: Althea Gibson. That day, they vowed to each other and to Althea to break the game’s color barrier and develop a grand slam champion. They made many personal and financial sacrifices to achieve this end. Althea later declared, “I owe the doctors a great deal. If I ever amount to anything, it will be because of them.” Althea integrated Forest Hills in 1950; seven years later, she won the event.

A New Junior Development Program

Dr. Johnson, a human dynamo, did not hesitate once Althea’s course was set. He immediately spun into action and established the Junior Development Tennis Program under the aegis of the American Tennis Association. Each summer, he invited dozens of talented juniors to train in Lynchburg on his backyard court. These young men and women traveled the country, winning titles and making history. In 1953 (Ashe’s first year at Dr. J’s camp), the USLTA extended an invitation to Dr. Johnson’s team to play the nationals at Kalamazoo, MI, using ATA credentials. That same summer, tennis great Bobby Riggs conducted a clinic on Dr. Johnson’s court.



Bobby Riggs

An Integrating Influence

Dr. Johnson, a soft-spoken man of unflinching determination, carried a “big racket” and quietly “aced” the tennis world. He had uncanny success influencing people and organizations into buying into his vision of a new tennis world. This unlikely pioneer was so influential in the game that he could get black players into the main draw of the U.S. Nationals at Forest Hills. This period of unprecedented opportunity for blacks on both the junior and adult circuits of the USLTA lasted until Dr. Johnson’s death in 1971.



An Unrivaled Legacy

“Dr. J” was more than a coach. He was a teacher and role model. He was a talent scout, par excellence, who could spot and develop untapped potential in players. He preached perseverance, patience, sportsmanship, etiquette, humility and hard work. He valued education and garnered for his campers’ college scholarships through his network of associations established during his college football playing and coaching days. His lasting legacy is that he made tennis accessible for everyone, by relocating the game from private, segregated country clubs, to integrated public facilities.



We Need Your Help to Preserve Dr. J's Legacy

Your donation today will help us preserve the legacy of Dr. Robert Walter "Whirlwind" Johnson for generations to come. Everyone who makes a donation will be notified of the progress on work to restore his home and the grounds and tennis court. Info can also be found by following us on Facebook. Your donation will go towards:

- Restoration of the home & tennis court
- Preservation of the grounds
- Construction of a museum to highlight the work and the achievements of Dr. J
- Ongoing tennis events: including exhibitions and tournaments

Donor sponsorship opportunities are available to help preserve Dr. Johnson's legacy, including:

- Donor bricks
- Donor benches
- Scoreboard sponsorship
- Umpire chair sponsorship
- Net sponsorship
- Water fountain sponsorship

DONATE TODAY!

Visit our website to make a donation to this important project:

whirlwindjohnson.org



Whirlwind Johnson
Foundation

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