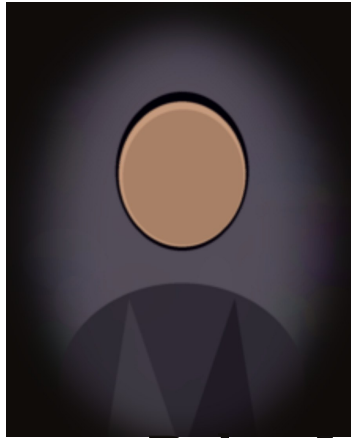




Constance Baker Motley

September 14, 1921 - September 28, 2005

New York, New York

Constance Baker Motley - American civil rights lawyer, state senator, Manhattan borough president, and federal judge who helped brief and argue the cases that cracked legal segregation - died in New York City on September 28, 2005. She was eighty-four. Born September 14, 1921, in New Haven, Connecticut, to Caribbean immigrant parents, she worked her way through college and Columbia Law after a philanthropist noticed a speech she gave on Black economic rights - a chance encounter that rerouted American legal history.

At the NAACP Legal Defense Fund she worked under Thurgood Marshall on *Brown v. Board of Education* and personally litigated school and university desegregation fights across the South, including James Meredith's admission to Ole Miss. She won nine of ten arguments before the Supreme Court. In 1964 she entered the New York State Senate; in 1965 she became Manhattan's borough president - the first woman in that post - and in 1966 Lyndon Johnson named her to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, the first Black woman on the federal bench. She later served as chief judge, writing opinions with the same steel she once carried into hostile courthouses.

New York was the long home of her public life. She died of congestive heart failure, leaving a docket of firsts that never interested her as much as the clients behind them.

New Haven grit and Columbia training met Jim Crow courtrooms where she was sometimes the only woman and the only Black lawyer in the room. She answered with preparation, not performance.

She died in New York City on September 28, 2005. Law students still underline her name beside Meredith and

Brown as proof that strategy can move a country.

Motley's gift was courtroom courage joined to institutional power - winning the case, then holding the gavel. Notice Nearby keeps the death date so September 28 remembers the New Haven-born advocate who made the federal bench look like the America she had argued into being.

Services

Died in New York City, September 28, 2005. Civil rights lawyer, NY state senator, Manhattan borough president, U.S. District Judge; NAACP LDF; Brown; Meredith.

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