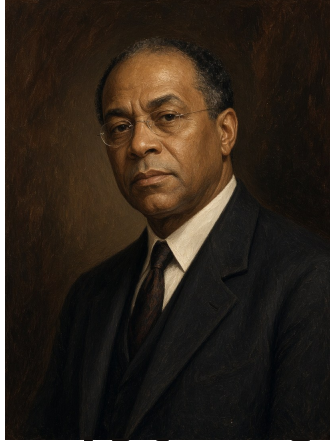




Mordecai Wyatt Johnson

January 12, 1890 - September 10, 1976

Washington, District of Columbia

Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, the first Black president of Howard University and the man who steered the campus through its decades of greatest growth, died at his home in Washington, D.C., on September 10, 1976. He was eighty-six.

Born in Paris, Tennessee, on January 12, 1890, the son of a Baptist minister and a mother who had been born into slavery, he graduated from Atlanta Baptist College (now Morehouse), took further degrees at the University of Chicago and Rochester Theological Seminary, and earned a Bachelor of Divinity from Harvard. He preached in Charleston, West Virginia, before Howard's trustees called him in 1926 to lead a university that was still more promise than plant.

Across thirty-four years he fought Congress for appropriations, recruited faculty who could stand with any research university, and insisted that Howard train professionals - lawyers, physicians, engineers, scholars - for a nation that preferred they stay invisible. Under his watch the law school that would shape Thurgood Marshall's generation hardened into a national instrument. He retired in 1960 having turned a fragile institution into a permanent one.

He died in Washington on the same calendar day as Dalton Trumbo, a coincidence that places two different American fights for dignity on one date. Howard's lawns and colleges remain the argument he made in brick and payroll.

Services

Died at home in Washington, D.C., on September 10, 1976. First African American president of Howard

University (1926-1960).

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