

# Herman A. and Dorothy H. Johnson

Philanthropists  
1916-2004

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by Mary Beveridge

Herman A. and Dorothy H. Johnson were a couple who complemented each other, working in their separate spheres and together as advocates and reformers of injustice.

She was born Dorothy Hodge in Kansas City, Kansas, on January 21, 1916. A Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of Kansas in journalism, she later received a Master's degree in social work from the same institution. Among her professional positions were journalist at *The Call*, public relations secretary for the Urban League, and Director of the Department of Health and Welfare of Jackson County. Her first husband, Dowdal H. Davis, was general manager of *The Call*. He died in 1957 and she married Herman Johnson in 1960.



He was born December 19, 1916, in Schenectady, New York, and graduated from Cornell University. He served with the Tuskegee Airmen in World War II and lived in Washington, D.C. and Ohio before moving to Kansas City in the late 1950s. In Kansas City, he established himself as a successful businessman owning an insurance agency and Lincoln cemetery. He served twice as president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and was a state representative from 1968 to 1972.

Both Dorothy and Herman served on numerous boards and philanthropic organizations. They were among the founders of LINC (Local Investment Commission). They were quiet but effective crusaders against racism and discrimination working with some of the most powerful business and civic leaders to advance the cause of African Americans and the economically disadvantaged. They were among the first African Americans to be invited to the Jewel Ball in 1991, and Dorothy was invited to a formal luncheon at the White House. While Herman was an advocate of cooperation, he could speak out quite forcefully when the occasion required it. In

the aftermath of the riots following Martin Luther King's death, he confronted Police Chief C. M. Kelly about the actions of the police toward the black community.

Herman Johnson died in Kansas City on February 17, 2004. Dorothy followed him five months later on July 7.

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