



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Delegate Magazine 1976**

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Lyndon B. Johnson

[[image - black & white photograph of Lyndon Johnson being sworn in as President of the United States in Air Force One shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy. Next to him is Jacqueline Kennedy.]] [[photo credit - Lyndon B. Johnson Library]]  
[[caption]] 2:40 p.m. CST; November 22, 1963 [[/caption]]

"The Democratic Party is the Instrument of Man"

## JOHNSON

He took the oath of office in a tight, crowded compartment of Air Force One, the presidential aircraft. His first task was to steady the people and to lead them through the traumatic transition of power. Then he would take up and see through to enactment most of the unfinished legislation of the Kennedy administration, and finally he would create his own presidency with its own vision of a Great Society.

Lyndon Johnson was the most politically experienced President and party leader in the Democrats' long history. He would need all his skills: as a Southerner, or Westerner, as he called himself, he headed a Northern, liberal, urban worker, black coalition joined with the traditional base of the South. A specialist in "the art of the possible," as he called it, he understood intimately the subtleties of guiding legislation through Congress, and he achieved one of the most outstanding legislative records in the history of the presidency. In 1964 he secured passage of a revolutionary tax reduction bill designed to spur the economy, and with the congressional leadership of Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota, he won the strongest civil rights bill in history, a remarkable feat, achieved after cloture killed a Southern filibuster.

Republican intraparty warfare boosted Johnson to a staggering majority in the 1964 election. He had chosen Senator Humphrey as his Vice President, and the ticket amassed sixty-one percent of the popular vote and a plurality of sixteen million. The Democratic tide swept two-thirds of the membership of both houses of Congress.

Early in 1965 President Johnson embarked upon the most comprehensive social legislation program since the New Deal. He achieved manpower training for the unemployed, Medicare for the elderly, increased social security benefits, economic development assistance for Appalachia and other depressed areas, low-cost housing and fair housing for minorities and aid to primary and secondary education. He raised important new issues which will affect politics for years to come: consumer protection with its concern for interest rates, food and product quality and other matters affecting the average American; environmental improvement which struck at pollution and, with the guidance of Mrs. Johnson, encouraged natural beauty, an anti-poverty crusade which lifted millions above the poverty line.

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