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## American Commemorative Panels: Arthur Ashe

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# Arthur Ashe

IN 2005, THE POSTAL SERVICE honors one of America's favorite sons, Arthur Ashe, the first African-American man to win Grand Slam tennis tournaments—Wimbledon and the United States and Australian Opens. Remembered for his prowess on the tennis courts of the world, Ashe became equally renowned for his intellect, his commitment to social causes,

and his ability to inspire others.

Because he was black, Ashe was barred from entering tennis competitions in the South, yet his enthusiasm for the sport and the tenacity he had developed in his childhood never flagged. Eventually he played in the most important tennis championships

in the world, and his long list of wins, among them three Grand Slam tournaments, made him a tennis sensation. The first African American to captain the Davis Cup team, Ashe led the team to win the cup in 1981 and 1982.

Ashe's commitment to social issues led him to establish foundations to help disenfranchised young people, to oppose South Africa's apartheid rule, and to fight AIDS, which he had contracted from a blood transfusion following heart surgery. Before dying from the disease in February 1993, Ashe spoke before the UN General Assembly and urged countries to increase their efforts and funding in the war against AIDS.

Today, Ashe is remembered as a sports hero, a thinker, and an inspiration to any American who dreams of fulfilling his or her own potential.

"My potential is more than can be expressed within the bounds of my race or ethnic identity," he wrote in his best-selling memoir *Days of Grace*. "My humanity, in common with all of God's children, gives the greatest flight to the full range of my possibilities. If I had one last wish, I would ask that all Americans could see themselves that way, past the barbed-wire fences of race and color. We are the weaker for these divisions, and the stronger when we transcend them."



*If I had one last wish, I would ask that all Americans could see themselves... past the barbed-wire fences of race and color.*

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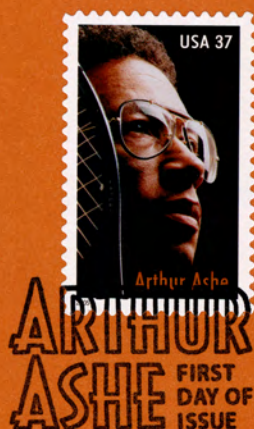
**Arthur Ashe**

Tennis superstar Arthur Ashe never expected to be remembered for his commitment to social causes, but he remained characteristically optimistic about the positive effect that even one person can have on the future.

"The years pass, and the world forgets the efforts of virtually all individual men and women of goodwill," he wrote in his memoir *Days of Grace*. "And yet those efforts are not necessarily in vain because they are forgotten. They may bear fruit in myriad unrecognized ways, small but potent—in one life helped there, a single future brightened there."

Ashe's decency and his commitment to social issues never faltered. Renowned as a sports trailblazer, he was the first African-American man to win Grand Slam tennis tournaments—Wimbledon and the United States and Australian Opens. From his tennis fame came numerous projects that suited his sharp intellect and wide-ranging interests. He painstakingly wrote and researched a three-volume work, *A Hard Road to Glory: A History of the African-American Athlete*, and he established foundations to help disenfranchised young people, to oppose South Africa's apartheid rule, and to fight AIDS, which he contracted from a blood transfusion following heart surgery.

A 1985 inductee into the International Tennis Hall of Fame, Ashe was named *Sports Illustrated's* "Sportsman of the Year" in 1992. After his death, he was honored with a statue in his hometown of Richmond, Virginia. In 1997 the United States Tennis Association named its new 23,000-seat U.S. Open tennis facility at Flushing Meadow, NY, for him. This stamp further ensures that the world does not forget this man of goodwill and his efforts to champion human dignity and just treatment for all.



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