

# HARRY A. COLE

1921-1999

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Harry A. Cole was born in Washington, D.C., on New Year's Day, 1921. After his father's death, his mother moved the family to her native Baltimore. Judge Cole graduated from Douglass High School in 1938 and then attended Morgan State University. As president of the Student Council during his senior year at Morgan, he helped organize the 1942 "March on Annapolis." The purpose of the 2,000 African-American citizens who converged on the state capital under the direction of Judge Cole's mentors, Lillie Carroll Jackson, head of the NAACP in Baltimore, Juanita Jackson Mitchell, and Carl Murphy, editor of the Afro-American newspaper, was to demand the repeal of Maryland's "Jim Crow" laws.



Harry Cole graduated magna cum laude from Morgan in 1943 and enlisted in the U. S. Army. He spent 17 months overseas in France and Belgium, and later on Okinawa. After the war, he enrolled at the University of Maryland School of Law, from which he graduated in 1949. After passing the bar exam, he went to work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People with W.A.C. Hughes and Robert B. Watts, his lifelong friend.

Judge Cole also became active in Republican politics. He was the first African-American appointed as an assistant attorney general of Maryland. In 1954, he won a seat in the Maryland Senate and became the first African-American elected to the Maryland General Assembly. He worked tirelessly to change the law to end discrimination. He was appointed to the Municipal Court of Baltimore City in 1967. Eight months later, he was elevated to the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City.

In 1977, Judge Cole was appointed to the Court of Appeals of Maryland by Governor Blair Lee III. He took the oath of office on December 12, 1977, as the first African-American to serve at the highest level in the state judicial system. He served with distinction for 13 years, until his mandatory retirement at age 70. From 1995 until his death in 1999, he served as chairman of the Board of Regents of Morgan State University.

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