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'Tennis Intensity' AWARD

GIVEN IN RECOGNITION OF THAT TENNIS PLAYER WHO, THRU THEIR PERSEVERENCE, ENDEAVORS TO DEFY THE ODDS CREATED BY CONVENTIONAL ATTITUDES AND THINKERS TO ACHIEVE IN A MANNER WORTHY OF COMMUNITY CITATION.

The first black tennis player to win one of the four major singles tournaments, Althea Gibson (1927–2003) helped integrate her sport at the height of the civil rights movement. She twice won Wimbledon and the U.S. Championships (now known as the U.S. Open) and became the top-ranked player in the world. Tall and lean, Gibson attacked relentlessly on the court. She was fast, had a long reach, and relied on a booming serve and precise volleys.

Gibson won the French Championships (now known as the French Open) in 1956, becoming the first black player to capture a major singles crown. She earned another landmark victory in July 1957, prevailing in the Wimbledon final in straight sets. Afterward, Gibson shouted, "At last! At last!" and was greeted by Queen Elizabeth II.

That September, she cruised to victory in the final of the U.S. Championships to win the tournament for the first time. In 1958, Gibson successfully defended her titles at Wimbledon and at the U.S. Championships. She retired from amateur tennis soon after, ending her career with five major singles titles and six major doubles titles.

"I know I've managed to be somebody," she wrote in her autobiography. "That's what I always wanted. I'm Althea Gibson, the tennis champion."