

# New Directions

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Volume 4 | Issue 2

Article 9

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1-1-1977

## The Farewell

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### Recommended Citation

Staff, Editorial (1977) "The Farewell," *New Directions*: Vol. 4: Iss. 2, Article 9.  
Available at: <https://dh.howard.edu/newdirections/vol4/iss2/9>

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# The Farewell



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Excerpts from Dr. Mordecai Wyatt Johnson's 1960 farewell speech:

On this, the final day of my 34 years as president of Howard University, I would first like to take this occasion to express my most sincere thanks and gratitude to you, the members of the Howard University community, for your untiring support and cooperation in our effort to make this university one of the finest in the world. As you know, no administrator can be any more competent or successful than the staff of professional people who surround him. Whatever success Howard University has enjoyed for the past 34 years is attributable in no small measure to the planning and work of each and everyone of you here today.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Government of the United States, both the Legislative and Executive branches, without whose assistance the dreams which I had on coming to Howard University would not have materialized.

... I am not troubled at all at the prospect of retiring. The fact is that I have sought retirement. In the first place, I think that an institution which has lived under the steady influence of one president for 34 years needs a breathing spell and the touch of a fresh and more youthful hand in its affairs. When I

Published by Digital Howard @ Howard University, 1977

expressed my desire to retire to the Board of Trustees some 14 months ago, I told them that nothing would delight me more than to see a vigorous and wise successor take hold of my work. I told them that if they found the right man, he would be able to do more in the next few years than all of his predecessors have done in the 93 years preceding.

... Some of you have asked me what I plan to do in retirement. My present plans are to spend the next year just *thinking*. Of course, I'll do a little speaking, not nearly as much as in the past, but I want to think. I want to think about America and the Negro's role in our great country. I want to think about America and the West and their relations with the Soviet Union. I also want to think about the underdeveloped and oppressed peoples of the world, and how we can bring to them a decent standard of living and the right for them to determine their own futures. And after this period of thinking, who knows, I might embark upon a new career. □